Originally published on the 40th anniversary of his murder at the hands of the authorities on November 19, 1915.

Songs of Joe Hill

AN OAK PUBLICATION $1.95 Edited by BARRIE STAVIS and FRANK HARMON

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foreword

On October 7, 1879, in Gavle, a harbor town on the eastern coast of Sweden, a boy was born to Olaf Hagglund and his wife Margritha Cathrina. He was christened Joel Emanuel.

Relatively little is known of his childhood and youth. Thirty odd years later, when he was in prison on a framed-up murder charge, he wrote to Katie Phar, a fifteen year old girl who used to sing his songs: "I am glad to hear that you are taking lessons and intend to be a musician. . . I wish I had had a chance to take music lessons when I was a kid, but I was not fortunate enough for that because I had to go to work at the age of 10, when my father died, and I had no money to spare for music lessons, but by trying hard I picked up what little I know about music without lessons. You see I've got music in my blood and it just comes natural to me to play any kind of an instrument."

In 1901 this young Swede emigrated to the United States. He stayed on the Eastern seaboard for about a year picking up whatever odd jobs he could find, including cleaning spitoons and "rattling the music box" (playing the piano) in a bowery saloon. Later, along with countless thousands of other emigrants from all parts of Europe, this young Swede moved slowly toward the West, always chasing the job. He worked in the wheat fields; he mined copper and smeltered it; he worked on the docks of California, a dock-walloper; and sometimes he shipped out as a sailor on the Honolulu run. And he was always writing songs and poems --- he used to call it "scribbling."

Somewhere along the line he changed his name to Joseph Hillstrom, which was soon shortened to Joe Hill.

In 1910, Joe Hill was in San Pedro, California. There he joined the Industrial Workers of the World -- the I.W.W. -- the Wobblies. The Industrial Workers of the World was founded in 1905. In contradistinction to the A.F. of L. craft unions which admitted only the skilled workers, the I.W.W. slogan was to organize everyone; skilled and non-skilled, high paid and low paid -- the migratory agricultural worker who moved across the United States following the crops as they ripened, the seasonal worker in the lumber camps and saw mills, the copper miners and coal miners, the smelters, the dock-wallopers. the sailors. Organize everybody regardless of race, creed or color. Make every working man a union man. And organize them on industrial lines rather than craft lines. This basic platform of the I.W.W. was to find its ultimate expression in the vast organizational drives of the C.I.O in the 1930's.

A year later, in 1911, Joe Hill wrote a song called "Casey Jones--The Union Scab." This is the first song we are sure Joe Hill wrote. There can be no question that he was writing songs for years, songs written rapidly and tailored to order for a specific situation. But the name of the author was the least important part of these songs which were thrown into the strike situation as quickly as written, serving as a weapon of organization and resistance. In addition to the songs and poems to be found in this book, there are a fair number of others which are attributed to Joe Hill. There are exceedingly plausible reasons for ascribing some of them to him; but this book will contain only those songs about which there can be no question.

Around 1910, the I.W.W. began publishing a song book. It was small, made to fit conveniently into the back pocket of a worker's pants or overalls. Its cover was red and the following caption was boldly printed in black ink: SONGS TO FAN THE FLAMES OF DISCONTENT. With each new edition of the Little Red Song Book the less popular songs were dropped out and the newer, more popular songs replaced them. In this book, Joe Hill and perhaps thirty to forty working class poets were to have their work set in

print and thereby achieve entrance into thousands and thousands of homes. These songs became a part of the living consciousness of men and women over the entire world; they were sung in the home, in the union hall, at street meetings, on the picket line -- and in jail, where the strikers were too often thrown.

Joe Hill was not an isolated genius, rising like a giant tree on a flat plain. He was part of a movement. There was Richard Brazier, Ralph Chaplin, T-Bone Slim, Laura Payne Emerson, William Whalen, Ethel Comer, John E. Nordquist, Pat Brennan, Covington Hall, Charles Ashleigh, Herbert Tulin and others who were writing directly and specifically for working class audiences. This is the basic thing that must be understood about these artists; they were writing for the working class. It is true that their songs and influence spread further than the audience for which they were primarily written, but this was incidental to their purpose -- a sort of secondary, though valuable by-product. Their songs were written to be sung in the union halls, the street meeting, the home and the campfire of the worker.

There were earlier song writers who wrote for the working class. Wherein did Joe Hill and his contemporaries differ from these earlier artists?

There is a two-fold difference.

First, up to this time working class songs were, in the main, written by people who were involved in a given situation in a given area, and the song grew out of the direct participation of the writer. Songs dealing with strikes in the coal mines were written by the miners themselves--or by their wives, sons and daughters. This is equally true of songs concerning ships, railroad building or lumberjacks. But Joe Hill and his fellow artists were the first professional song writers for the American working class. And it is significant that this group emerged simultaneously with the emergence of the I.W.W. whose basic platform called for industrial organization. It should be also noted that all of these song writers were members of the I.W.W.

By "professional" I do not mean that these artists earned their bread and butter from royalties and licensing fees. Far from it! To be a song writer for the working class was an additional responsibility gladly assumed by these writers. They worked at odd jobs and did their writing on their lunch time and at night. They paid for their own paper, ink and music sheets. And when the song was written it was given directly to the people to use, or, perhaps, turned over to the I.W.W. who printed the song and used the small proceeds for their organizational needs. By "professional" I mean that these artists wrote songs which did not necessarily stem from their personal experience and were often written to meet the needs of a situation. As I show in the introductory notes to "Where The Fraser River Flows," Joe Hill upon learning of the strike of the men who were building a railroad grade in British Columbia, Canada, immediately wrote a song for them. The same is true of the Lawrence, Mass. strike. Most of Joe Hill's letters have been lost or deliberately destroyed; but we are fortunate to have still remaining in his correspondence a specific example of his writing to fit a given situation. In the introductory notes to Joe Hill's "It's A Long Way Down To The Soupline," you will see that Joe Hill's friend, Sam Murray, asks him to write a song dealing with certain conditions in San Francisco. (Joe Hill was in prison at this time.) Joe Hill's reply is the reply of a professional song writer gathering material preparatory to writing the song. He writes: ". . . I might try to dope something out about the Frisco Fair. I am not familiar with the actual conditions of Frisco at present; and when I make a song I always try to picture things as they really are. Of course a little pepper and salt is allowed in order to bring out the facts more clearly. If you send me that sheet music and give me some of the peculiarities and ridiculous points about the conditions in general on or about the fair grounds, I'll try to do the best I can.

Joe Hill and his contemporaries in the I.W.W. also wrote another kind of song; "general" songs, "teaching" songs. These did not deal with a spe-

cific situation but were designed to strip away false and romantic notions of the way the world operated and to set in their place a more real understanding. The I.W.W. had a program for the solution of the ills of the world and these songs consciously reflected that program. This is the second point of difference between the earlier writers and those of Joe Hill's time. Earlier writers, on the rare occasions when they wrote a song which voiced an opinion in favor of a cause, advanced no program to achieve that cause. The songs of Joe Hill and his contemporaries, however, set forth a viewpoint regarding the real nature of the economic and social world and also showed their relationship. These songs, in addition, expressed the various planks of the I.W.W. program; further, tried to recruit the entire working class into the One Big Union in order to bring into fruition (to quote from Joe Hill's "We Will Sing One Song") "the Worker's Commonwealth full of beauty, full of love and health."

During May, 1915, I.W.W. organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, then twenty-five years old, visited Joe Hill in jail. Afterwards, writing in the I.W.W. paper "Solidarity" about her visit, she very aptly expressed this point: "Joe writes songs that sing, that lilt and laugh and sparkle, that kindle the fires of revolt in the most crushed spirit and quicken the desire for fuller life in the most humble slave. . . . He has expressed the manifold phases of our propaganda from the gay of 'Mr. Block' and 'Casey Jones' to the grave of 'Should a gun I ever shoulder, 'tis to crush the tyrant's might.' He has crystallized the organization's spirit into imperishable forms, songs of the people -- folk songs."

From his own time to this day, Joe Hill's work has profoundly influenced not only writers for the working class, but all types of folk writing. During the depression of the '30's and the powerful organizational drives of the CIO in that period, there was a great upsurge of union songs and songs of protest. These were directly influenced by Joe Hill and the rest of this significant group of Wobbly writers. The Almanac Singers claimed Joe Hill as their own. And there were other song-writers: Woody Guthrie ("Union Maid"), Maurice Sugar ("Sit Down" and "The Soup Song"), Lee Hays ("Roll The Union On" in collaboration with Claude Williams), Aunt Molly Jackson and others. Men like Earl Robinson and Pete Seeger first came into prominence during this period. Their talents have flowered and they are to this day profoundly important artists. And new talents whose tradition traces back to Joe Hill are continually coming to the fore.

Most of Joe Hill's songs, and it is equally true of his contemporaries, are parodies of popular songs of the day. A few are set to church hymns, a very few to original music. Few, if any, musicians were ready to compose for the working class. Perforce, therefore, the poets took whatever music was at hand, namely the popular music of the day, and used it for their purposes. In practice it worked out that this necessity to write parodies proved a virtue. The police, in conjunction with thugs, vigilantes, finks and "pinks" (strike-breakers and other riff-raff of the Pinkerton Detective Agency) used to molest and raid the Wobbly street meetings, frequently slugging and clubbing the participants, doing all things possible to break up these meetings. Under such conditions, the song had to be learned as quickly as possible. If the tune was known, then half the problem was solved at once and even made for ease in remembering the words.**

Some of Joe Hill's songs are already a permanent part of American folk literature; some of his phrases like "pie-in-the-sky" and "wooden medal" are part of the living language. But it is necessary to state here that not all of his songs and poems achieve the level of "Casey Jones," "The Preacher and the Slave," "There Is

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** Since many of the songs are parodies of popular songs whose copyright is still in force, the following songs have had new tunes written for them for this book: Where The Fraser River Flows; Everybody's JoiningIt; Mister Block; What We Want; Should I Ever Be A Soldier; The White Slave; It's A Long Way Down To The Soupline.

Power," "What We Want" and "My Last Will." Songs such as "The White Slave" and "Don't Take My Papa Away From Me" and the poem "Let Bill Do It" are poorly conceived and poorly executed. They are included for historical interest. It is also necessary to state that Joe Hill's talents as a composer of music in no way matches his great gifts as a writer. The fact is that he was a poor composer. Much of his original music is ordinary, some of it is banal, and some of it, alas, just doesn't play and had to be reworked by other musicians for this book. One of his compositions which was written while he was in jail, "A Trip To Honolulu," a march without words, had to be eliminated for the reason that it does not play.

The only remaining member of Joe Hill's immediate family, a younger sister, is living in Sweden. In a recent letter to me, this gallant seventy-year old lady who is proud of her great brother and his work, wrote that the most outstanding thing about him as a boy was his love of music. Had Joe Hill been able to study and have training in composition instead of having to start work at the age of ten, who knows what level of perfection he could have reached.

* * *

During January, 1914, Joe Hill was picked up on a murder charge. It was a bald frame-up. For months, a vicious newspaper barrage was directed against him, a barrage which found him guilty before the case even went to trial. When, in June 1914, the case finally did go to trial, Joe Hill faced a most prejudiced judge, an improperly selected jury, and, in addition, was saddled with a defense counsel which was either frightfully incompetent or else was betraying Joe Hill and working hand-in-hand with the district attorney. Joe Hill was found guilty on the highly questionable circumstantial evidence and sentenced to death. As I show in my book on Joe Hill, "The Man Who Never Died," the court record was an exceedingly black one; and, conveniently, the bulk of this record since mysteriously disappeared from the office of the Clerk of the District Court of Salt Lake County. Joe Hill was in prison for twenty-two bitter months. During this period of time millions of people rallied to his cause. President Wilson intervened twice on behalf of Joe Hill..The Swedish Government intervened -- for Joe Hill was still a Swedish citizen; and, finally, the Swedish ambassador, W.A.F. Ekengren, broke all precedent by communicating directly with Governor Spry of Utah in an attempt to save Joe Hill's life. The A.F. of L. then in session at its thirty-fifth annual convention, unanimously voted condemning the trial proceedings. In part, their resolution stated that ". . . the circumstances surrounding the said conviction and sentence were such as to make the grounds for this conviction and sentence appear to be utterly inadequate. . . in that the evidence was of a purely circumstantial nature and highly improbable, and the rights of the said Joseph Hillstrom do not appear to have been sufficiently, or at all, safeguarded, but on the contrary seem to have been violated to such an extent that the said Joseph Hillstrom did not have a fair and impartial trial." The resolution further urged the Governor of Utah "to stop the execution of the said Joseph Hillstrom and that he be given a new and fair trial."

But the copper bosses were determined to get Joe Hill out of the way and nothing availed. Joe Hill, rebel and artist, was executed in the early morning of November 19, 1915.

But, "what they forgot to kill went on to organize." And, it seems to me, that it is not only what they FORGOT to kill but of equal importance, what they COULD NOT kill. Paul Robeson expresses this thought in his magnificent rendition of the Robinson-Hayes song -- singing it "what they could never kill" -- and he emphasizes the word 'never.'

* * *

Earlier in this introduction I have remarked that other songs and poems have been ascribed to Joe Hill. Some day, I hope soon, a further edition of this book will appear containing this additional information. In anticipation of that time I earnestly and cordially invite all people who have further material on Joe Hill, or who have know-

ledge of the whereabouts of such material, to communicate with me in care of the publishers, People's Artists Inc., 124 West 21st St., N.Y. 11, N.Y. There are still many gaps in Joe Hill's life which my fellow researchers and I are anxious to fill in.

* * *

It has been a genuine pleasure to work with the musical collaborator of this book, Frank Harmon. His extensive knowledge and excellent judgement have been invaluable.

Frank Harmon and I wish to thank Bob DeCormier, Ernest Gruber, Earl Robinson, Pete Seeger, and Jerry Silverman for their considerable and devoted aid in the preparation of this book. My deepest thanks to my wise and indefatigable fellow researcher in the history of Joe Hill and his times, Joseph A. Curtis. I am indebted to the perception and taste of my wife, Bernice, in the preparation of the manuscript. Irwin Silber, Executive Secretary of People's Artists, has offered many exceedingly acute suggestions and criticisms. I have accepted the majority of these to the benefit of the manuscript. Irwin Silber is also responsible for the layout and design of the book.

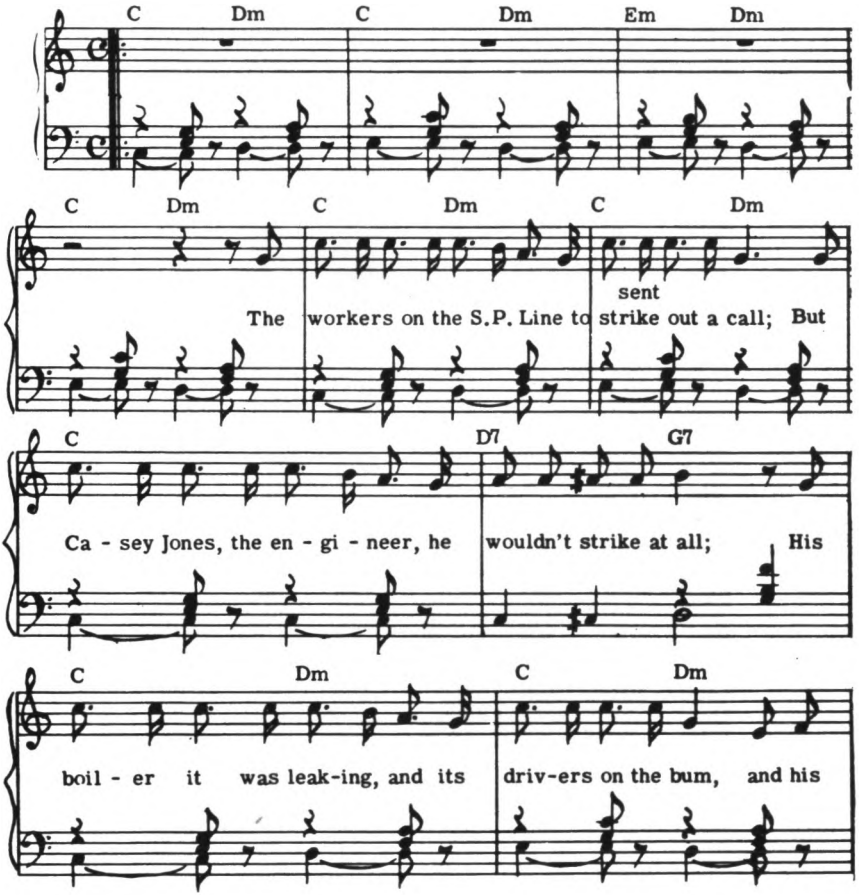
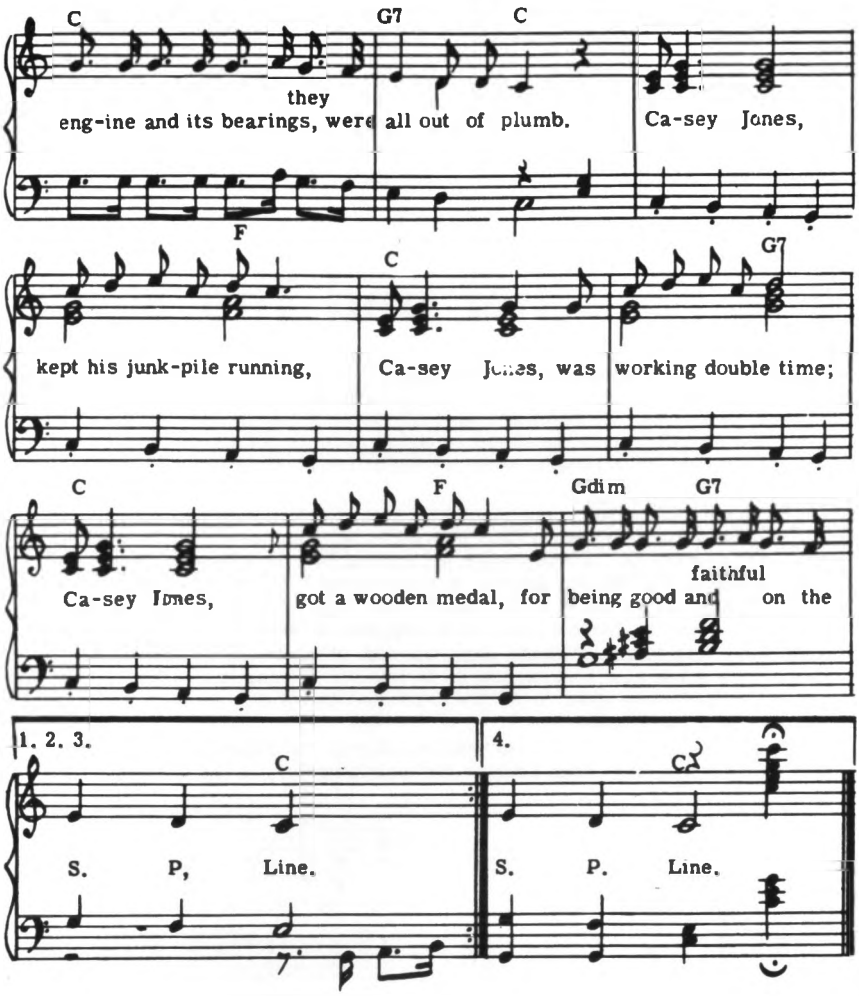
October 15, 1955 Barrie Stavis

Casey Jones—The Union Scab

Arrangement by Earl Robinson

"Casey Jones -- The Union Scab," needs little introduction. It was written in 1911 to meet a strike situation in California and was a parody of a popular song of that day.

This song, sardonic and joyfully venomous, was first printed on little colored cards made from whatever odd lots of paper stock the printer had on hand at the moment. The cards, approximately the size of a playing card, were distributed to the strikers who sang "Casey Jones" on the picket line -- and when they were slugged and thrown into jail they still sang "Casey Jones." The cards were also sold, the money going into the meager strike funds. Migratory laborers carried the colored cards with them and brought the song to their fellow workers all across the land. Sailors carried the song on their ships and thus into the ports of many countries. With incredible speed "Casey Jones" became popular over the world -- and has retained its popularity to this day.


C Dm C Dm Em Dm
C Dm C Dm C Dm
The workers on the S.P. Line to sent strike out a call; But
C D7 G7
Ca - sey Jones, the en - gi - neer, he wouldn't strike at all; His
C Dm C Dm
boil - er it was leak-ing, and its driv-ers on the bum, and his

The workers said to Casey: "Won't you help us win this strike?"
But Casey said: "Let me alone, you'd better take a hike."
Then Casey's wheezy engine ran right off the worn out track,
And Casey hit the river with an awful crack.

Casey Jones, hit the river bottom,
Casey Jones broke his blooming spine,
Casey Jones became an angeleno,
He took a trip to heaven on the S. P. Line.

When Casey Jones got up to heaven to the Pearly Gate,
He said: "I'm Casey Jones, the guy that pulled the S. P. freight."
"You're just the man," said Peter, "our musicians are on strike;
"You can get a job a-scabbing anytime you like."

Casey Jones got a job in heaven;
Casey Jones was doing mighty fine;
Casey Jones went scabbing on the angels,
Just like he did to workers on the S. P. Line."

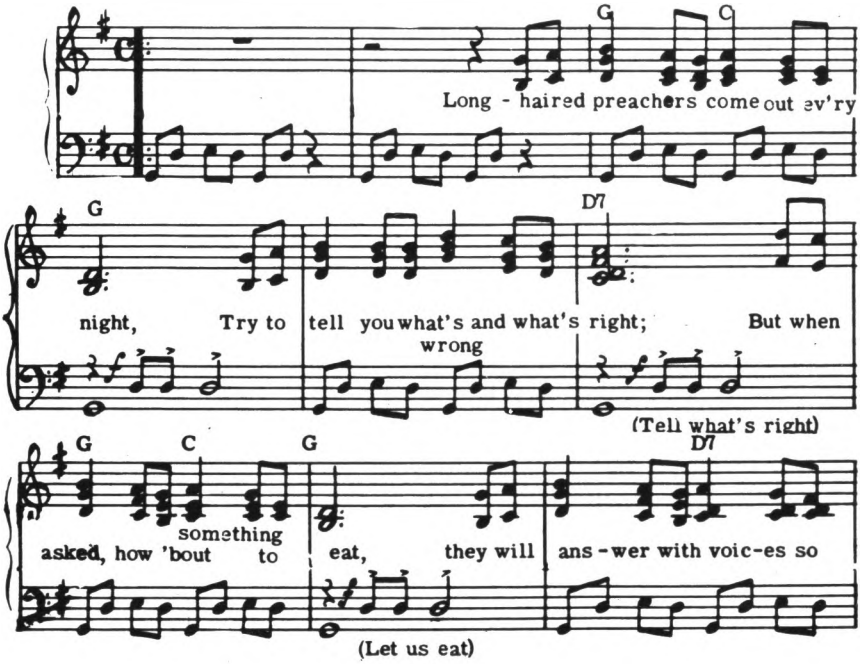
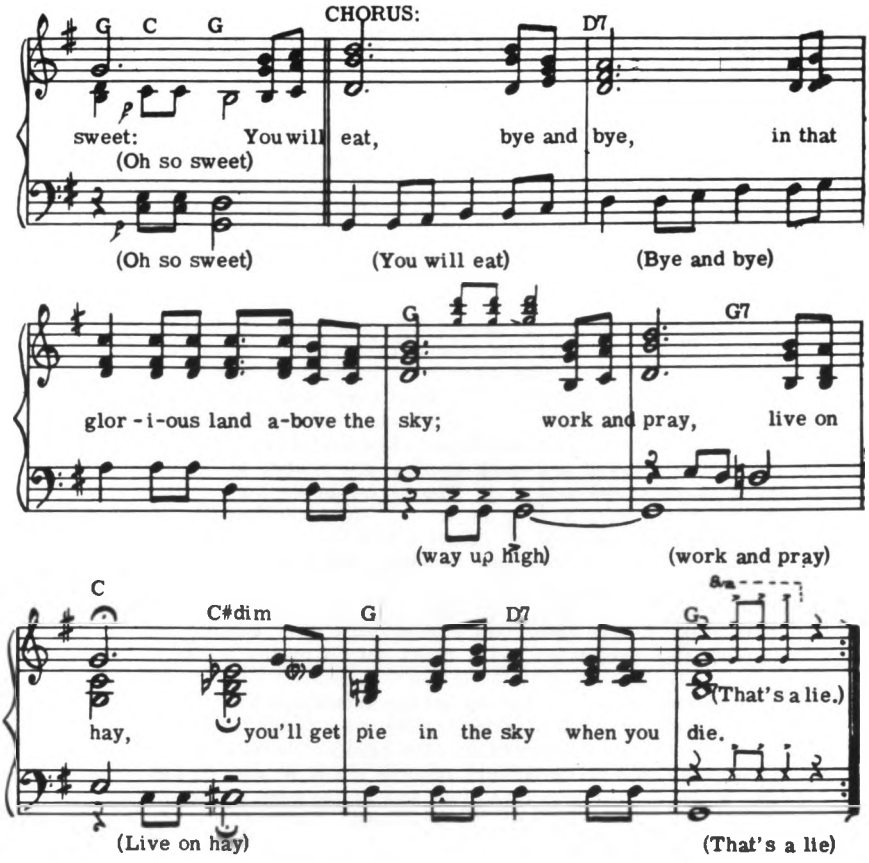
The angels got together, and they said
it wasn't fair,
For Casey Jones to go around
a-scabbing everywhere.
The Angels Union No. 23, they sure
were there,
And they promptly fired Casey down
the Golden Stair.

Casey Jones went to Hell a-flying.
"Casey Jones," the Devil said, "Oh fine;
"Casey Jones, get busy shoveling
sulphur --
"That's what you get for scabbing on
the S. P. Line."

The Preacher and The Slave

Edition #3 of The Little Red Songbook, published in 1911, contains the second of Joe Hill's known songs, "The Preacher and The Slave." Whereas "Casey Jones" was written for a specific strike situation and was designed to achieve a specific, concrete result -- to help win the strike -- "The Preacher and The Slave" is a general song, a song which reaches beyond the specifics of a given situation.

This pie-in-the-sky song caustically mocks those preachers who offer golden mansions in heaven after one dies, but can offer only a program of rags and starvation, of hard work and eating hay, here on this earth. It reminds me of the Welsh miner I met in London in the 1930's. The Welsh miners were on strike and this miner had been delegated as part of a committee to come to London and try to organize defense and relief for the miners. He said to me, "These days we mix other songs in with our church songs. We have one song whose first line is: "Bread is Heaven. Give me bread.'" Had they ever met, Joe Hill and the Welsh miners would have gotten along very well.

Twenty years after its composition, during the depression of the '30's, this "Pie-in-the-Sky" song became the marching song of the unemployed.

And the starvation army they play,
And they sing and they clap and they pray.
Till they get all your coin on the drum,
Then they'll tell you when you're on the bum: (Chorus)

Holy Rollers and Jumpers come out,
And they holler, they jump and they shout.
"Give your money to Jesus," they say,
"He will cure all diseases today."
(Chorus)

If you fight hard for children and wife -
Try to get something good in this life —
You're a sinner and bad man, they tell,
When you die you will sure go to hell.
(Chorus)

Workingmen of all countries unite,
Side by side we for freedom will fight!
When the world and its wealth we have gained,
To the grafters we'll sing this refrain:

FINAL CHORUS:
You will eat, bye and bye,
When you've learned how to cook and to fry.
Chop some wood, 'twill do you good,
And you'll eat in the sweet bye and bye.

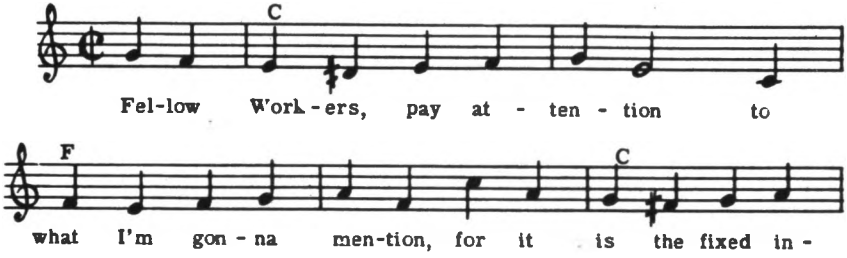
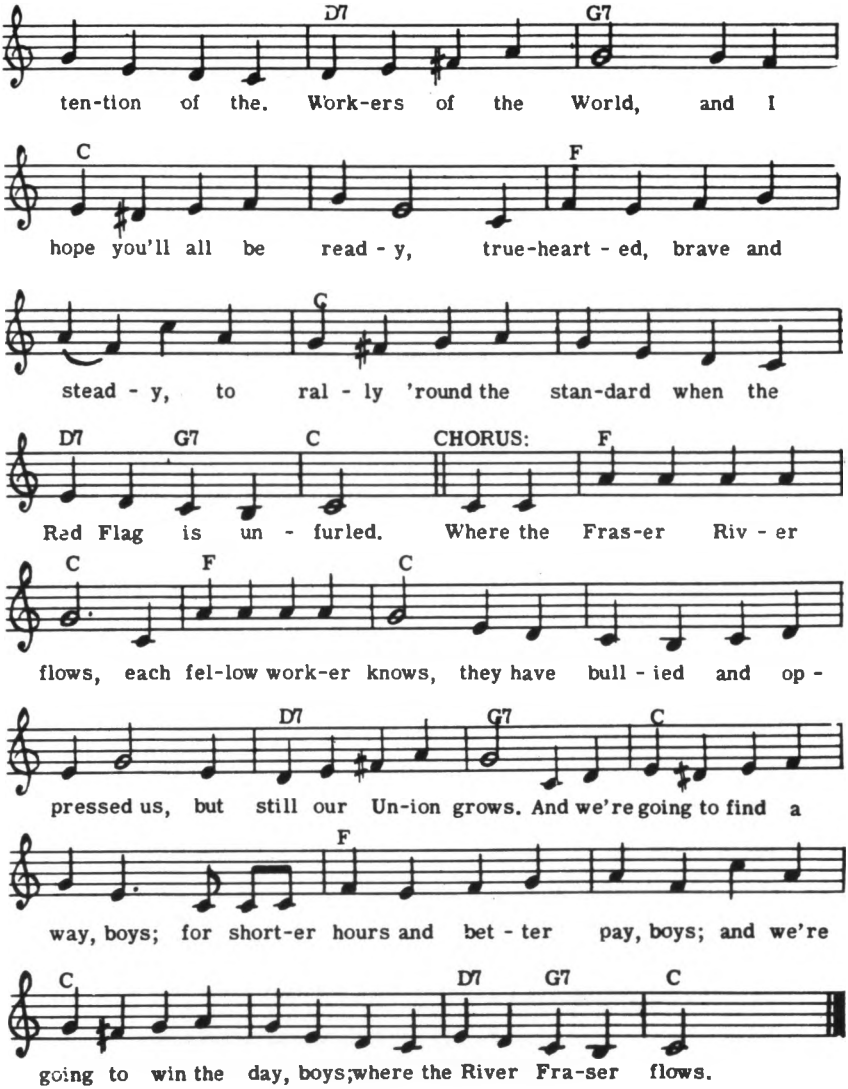
Where the Fraser River Flows

It is fascinating to speculate upon, and rewarding to discover, a writer's source of inspiration. I believe I have found the inspiration for Joe Hill's "Where the Fraser River Flows." The Industrial Worker, an official newspaper of the I.W.W., describing the strike of construction workers who were building a railroad grade in British Columbia in Northern Canada, carries the following news story in an April, 1912 issue:

> ". . . the main thing that caused the walkout was the foul condition of the camps in which the men were herded. . . . In one of the Tierney camps the bunks were built three tiers high and the men after waking each morning for a short time, with raging headaches, tore down the top bunk. . . In other camps the floors were laid directly upon the ground instead of 18 inches above, insufficient air space was allowed and wash houses, dry houses and bath houses were of the vilest sort. . . . The strike broke out on the 27th in Nelson and Benson's camp no. 4. . . . The men came down the line and called all men out at camps 3 and 2. A meeting was held at I.W.W. hall in Lytton and demands were formulated, various committees elected and in a short time the entire line from Hope to Kamloops was tied up, over 4,200 men being directly involved. . . The strikers have their own commissary. . . . Drunkenness was immediately prohibited and a court set up by the strikers themselves. Any infraction of the strike committee's rules brings forth such sentences as: 'Go and cut ten big armfuls of firewood.' 'Carry ten coal-oil cans full of water for the camp cooks.'. . . . The provincial police are reported to have received several shipments of rifles, and this is verified by reports of I.W.W. men on the scene. Any violence that may take place will be the work of those provincials or of other agents of the employers. . . ."

Four weeks later the Industrial Worker carried the following news item: "The strikers on the Canadian Northern are singing songs as they carry on the strike. The songs are said to be the work of Fellow Worker J. Hill. Lack of space prevents the publication of more than one of them. We insert the following which is sung to the tune of "Where the Shannon River Flows.'"

Joe's song about the strike on the Fraser River follows immediately below this news item. Here it is.



D7 G7
ten-tion of the. Work-ers of the World, and I
C F
hope you'll all be read - y, true-heart - ed, brave and
C
stead - y, to ral - ly 'round the stan-dard when the
D7 G7 C CHORUS: F
Red Flag is un - furled. Where the Fras-er Riv - er
C F C
flows, each fel-low work-er knows, they have bull - ied and op -
D7 G7 C
pressed us, but still our Un-ion grows. And we're going to find a
F
way, boys; for short-er hours and bet - ter pay, boys; and we're
C D7 G7 C
going to win the day, boys;where the River Fra-ser flows.

For these gunny-sack contractors have all been dirty actors,
And they're not our benefactors, each fellow worker knows.
So we've got to stick together in fine or dirty weather,
And we will show no white feather, where the Fraser River flows.

Now the boss the law is stretching, bulls and pimps he's fetching,
And they are a fine collection, as Jesus only knows.
But why their mothers reared them, and why the devil spared them,
Are questions we can't answer, where the Fraser River flows.

John Golden and the Lawrence Strike

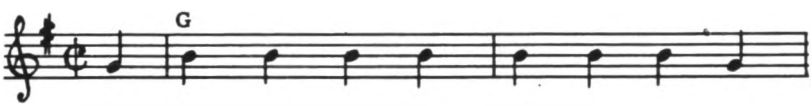
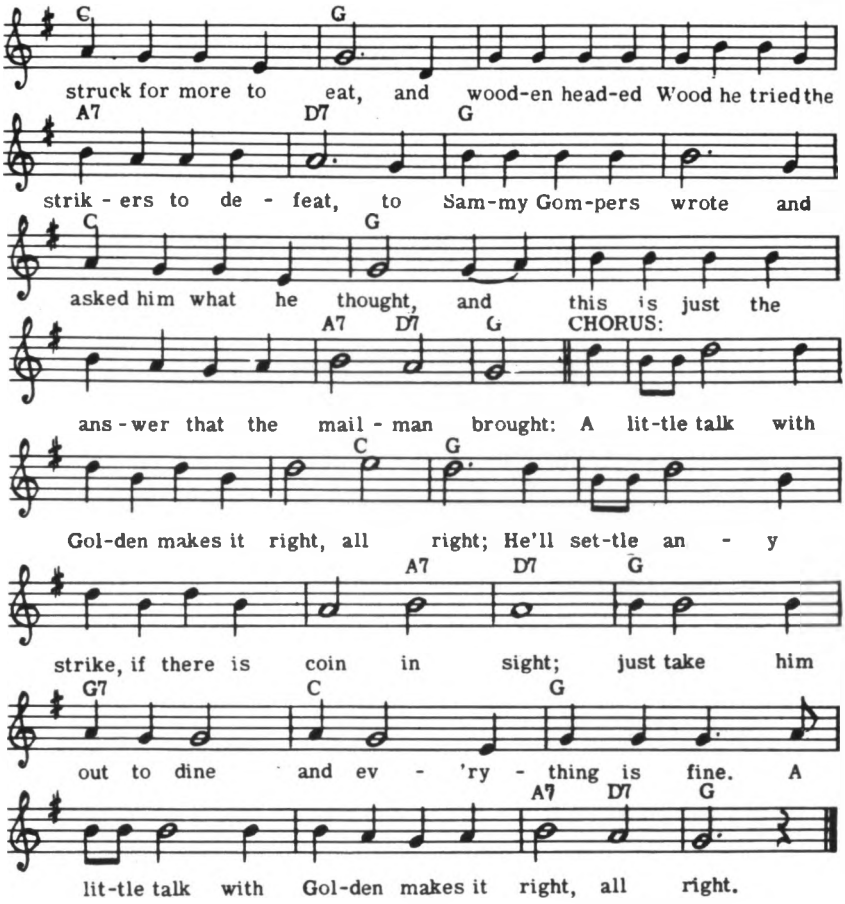
From the Pilgrim Fathers on, America has been settled by wave after wave of immigrants. In the 19th and early 20th century hundreds of thousands of Swedes, Poles, Finns, Hungarians, Italians, Greeks, Czechs, Germans, Belgians, French, Lithuanians, Latvians, Russians, all these and more, came to the shores of America in search of a new and better life. Many tens of thousands of these immigrants remained in the East and found work in the New England cotton and woolen mills. Their hours were long, their pay was low. They had fled poverty in Europe only to encounter it once again in their new homeland.

It was said that in 1912, at the time of the great strike in Lawrence, Mass., forty-four different languages and dialects were spoken and that about half the population were foreign born; and even of the native born, a large percentage spoke the language of their forbears and practiced the customs of the old country. This situation of language and custom barrier was used by all mill owners in their deliberate policy of pitting one group of foreigners against another. The worst offender was William Wood of the American Woolen Company. When the strike broke out in Lawrence, William Wood and the rest of the mill owners thought that the strike would be rapidly broken, and in this they would be aided by John Golden, said to be a most venial labor leader. But the I.W.W. sent Joseph J. Ettor and Arturo Giovannitti, two young and brilliant labor organizers, to help the strikers. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, organizer and orator for the I.W.W., then 22 years old, often called "The Joan of Arc of the Working Class," was also sent there by the I.W.W. These organizers helped break down the racial and language barriers and organized the striking mill workers into one homogeneous force acting in concert.

And they sang! It was a singing strike! Ray Stannard Baker, one of the great reporters of that time, wrote as follows about the Lawrence Strike:

> "This movement in Lawrence was strangely a singing movement. It is the first strike I ever saw which sang. I shall not soon forget the curious lift, the strange sudden fire, of the mingled nationalities at the strike meetings when they broke into the universal language of song. And not only at the meetings did they sing, but at the soup-houses and in the streets. I saw a group of women strikers, who were peeling potatoes at a relief station, suddenly break into song."

And one of the songs the singing striking workers sang was Joe Hill's "John Golden and the Lawrence Strike."

One short note: The "pinks" referred to in the song are the men of the Pinkerton Detective Agency. These "pinks" were hired by the bosses to serve as sluggers, strike-breakers, finks, labor spies and sundry other equally pleasant occupations.

C G
struck for more to eat, and wood-en head-ed Wood he tried the
A7 D7 G
strik - ers to de - feat, to Sam-my Gom-pers wrote and
C G
asked him what he thought, and this is just the
A7 D7 G CHORUS:
ans - wer that the mail - man brought: A lit-tle talk with
C G
Gol-den makes it right, all right; He'll set-tle an - y
A7 D7 G
strike, if there is coin in sight; just take him
G7 C G
out to dine and ev - 'ry - thing is fine. A
A7 D7 G
lit-tle talk with Gol-den makes it right, all right.

The preachers, cops and money kings were working hand in hand,
The boys in blue, with stars and stripes, were sent by Uncle Sam;
Still things were looking blue, 'cause every striker knew
That weaving cloth with bayonets is hard to do. (Chorus)

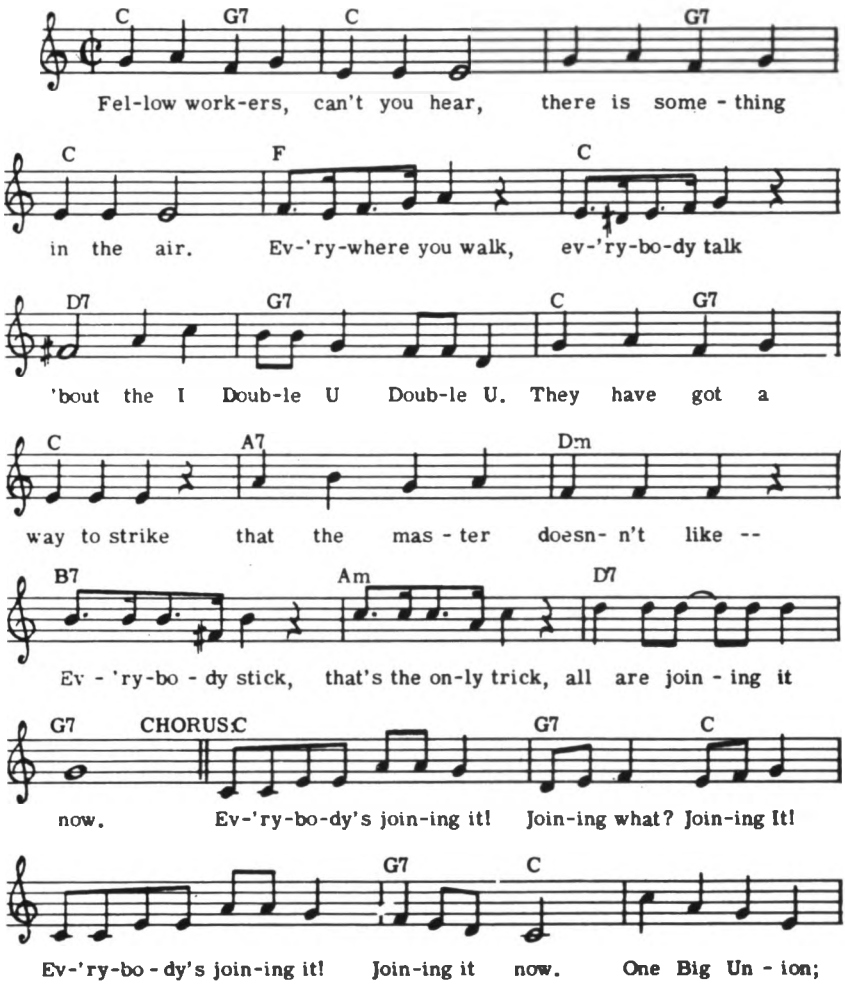
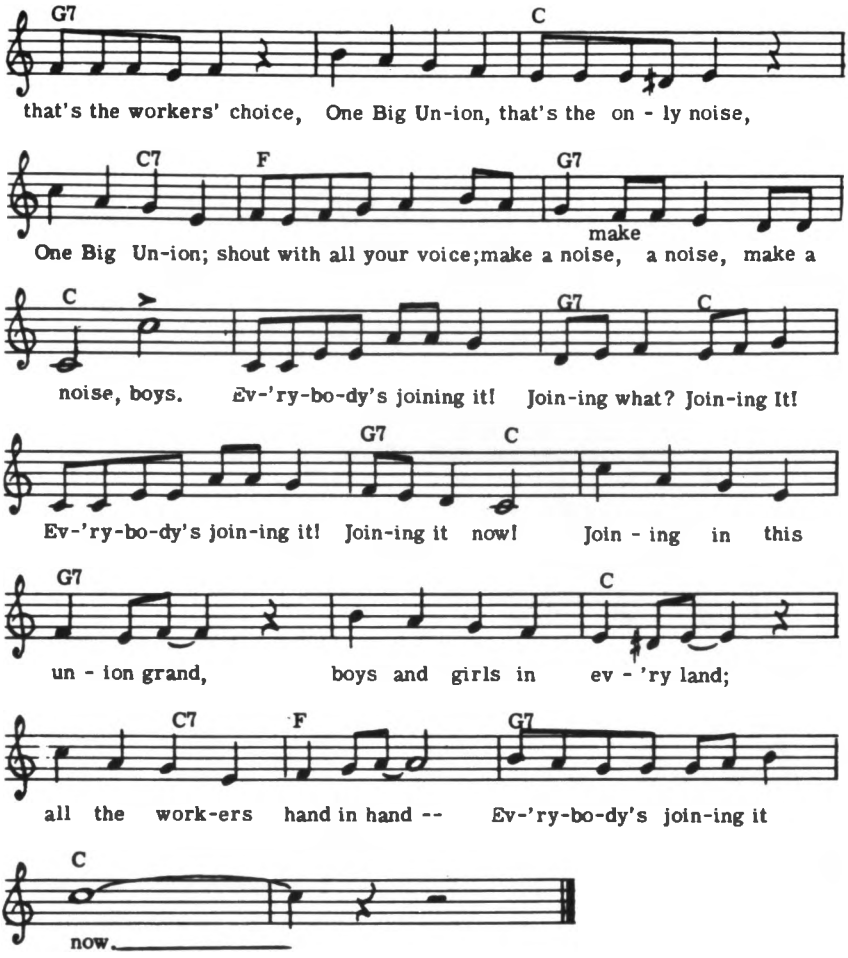
John Golden had with Mr. Wood a private interview,
He told him how to bust up the "I double double U."
He came out in a while and wore the Golden smile.
He said: "I've got all labor leaders skinned a mile." (Chorus)

John Golden pulled a bogus strike with all his "pinks and stools."
He thought the rest would follow like a bunch of crazy fools.
But to his great surprise the "foreigners" were wise,
In one big solid union they were organized. (Chorus)

FINAL CHORUS:
That's one time Golden did not make it right, all right;
In spite of all his schemes the strikers won the fight.
When all the workers stand united hand in hand,
The world with all its wealth will be at their command.

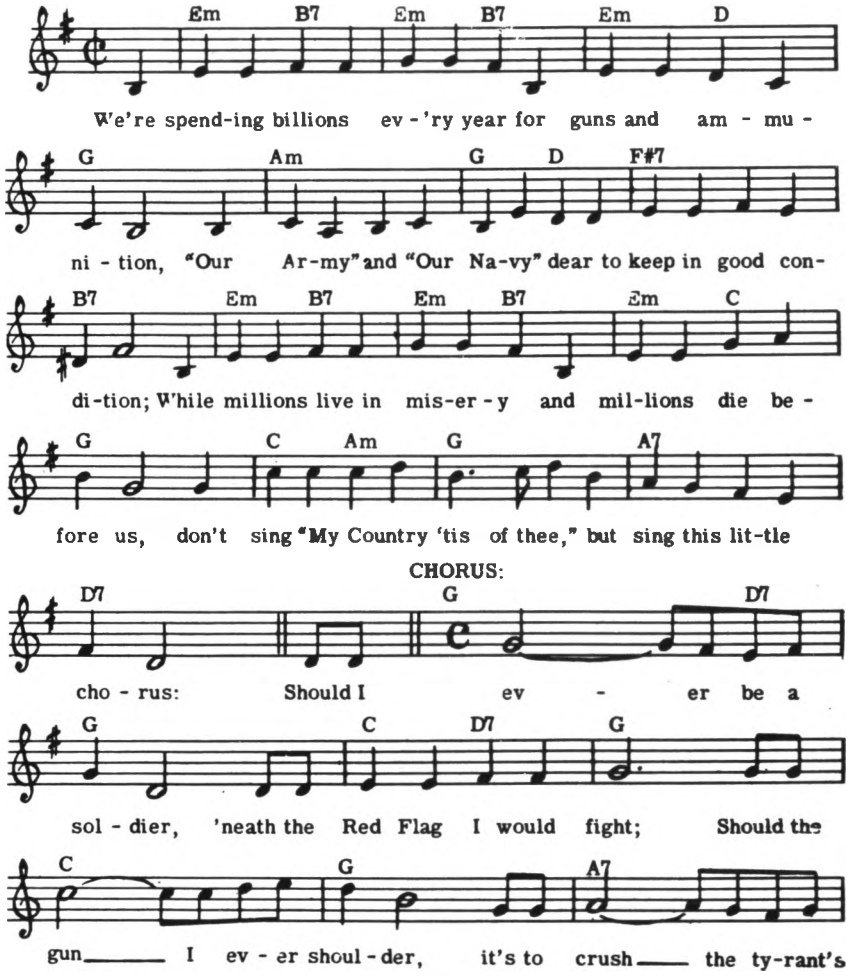
Everybody's Joining It

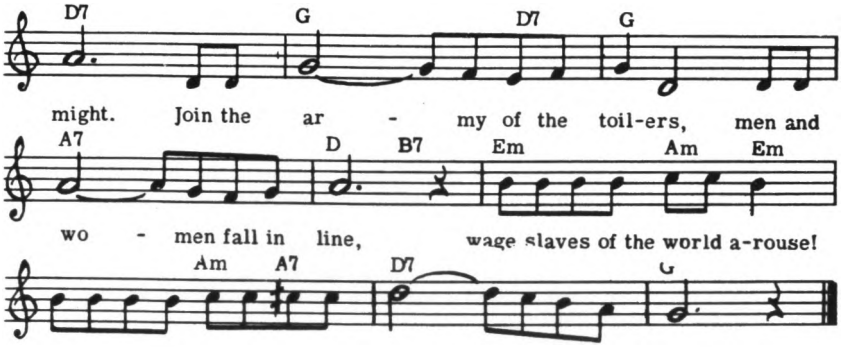
This is the first of Joe Hill's recruiting songs -- it even has the word "joining" in its title. There were dozens of "join the union" songs in the '30's which were in the direct tradition of "Everybody's Joining It." There are, for example, Woody Guthrie's "You Gotta Go Down and Join the Union" and the Almanacs' "Union Train."


C G7 C G7
Fel-low work-ers, can't you hear, there is some - thing
C F C
in the air. Ev-'ry-where you walk, ev-'ry-bo-dy talk
D7 G7 C G7
'bout the I Doub-le U Doub-le U. They have got a
C A7 Dm
way to strike that the mas - ter doesn- n't like --
B7 Am D7
Ev - 'ry-bo - dy stick, that's the on-ly trick, all are join - ing it
G7 CHORUS:C G7 C
now. Ev-'ry-bo-dy's join-ing it! Join-ing what? Join-ing It!
G7 C
Ev-'ry-bo - dy's join-ing it! Join-ing it now. One Big Un - ion;

The Boss is feeling mighty blue,
He don't know just what to do.
We have got his goat,
Got him by the throat,
Soon he'll work or go starving.
Join the I-Double-U Double-U,
Don't let bosses trouble you,
Come and join with us --
Everybody does --
You've got nothing to lose. (Chorus)

Will the One Big Union grow?
Mister Bonehead wants to know.
Well! What do you think,
Of that funny gink
Asking such foolish questions?
Will it grow? Look a here,
Brand new unions everywhere,
Better take a hunch,
Join the fighting bunch,
Fight for Freedom and Right. (Chorus)

Should I Ever Be A Soldier

The red flag has long been a symbol of workers' and labor organizations. It has been the emblem for such diverse groups as the Paris Commune, the Russian Bolsheviks, and the I.W.W. The Irish Rebel, James Connolly, wrote "The Red Flag," an internationally-popular song which is the anthem of the British Labor Party. The first line of Connolly's song reflects the universality of the symbol: "The workers' flag is deepest red." It is in this symbolic sense that Joe Hill uses the red flag in "Should I Ever Be A Soldier."

Em B7 Em B7 Em D
We're spend-ing billions ev - 'ry year for guns and am - mu -
G Am G D F#7
ni - tion, "Our Ar-my" and "Our Na-vy" dear to keep in good con-
B7 Em B7 Em B7 Em C
di-tion; While millions live in mis-er - y and mil-lions die be -
G C Am G A7
fore us, don't sing "My Country 'tis of thee," but sing this lit-tle
CHORUS:
D7 G D7
cho - rus: Should I ev - er be a
G C D7 G
sol - dier, 'neath the Red Flag I would fight; Should the
C G A7
gun I ev - er shoul - der, it's to crush the ty-rant's


D7 G D7 G
might. Join the ar - my of the toil-ers, men and
A7 D B7 Em Am Em
wo - men fall in line, wage slaves of the world a-rouse!
Am A7 D7 G
Do your du-ty for the cause,for Land____ and Li - ber - ty.

And many a maiden, pure and fair,
Her love and pride must offer
On Mammon's altar in despair,
To fill the master's coffer.
The gold that pays the mighty fleet,
From tender youth he squeezes,
While brawny men must walk the street
And face the wintry breezes.
-Chorus-

Why do they mount their gatling gun
A thousand miles from ocean,
Where hostile fleet could never run --
Ain't that a funny notion?
If you don't know the reason why,
Just strike for better wages,
And then, my friends, if you don't die,
You'll sing this song for ages.
-Chorus-

Mister Block

"Mr. Block" is the second "general" or "teaching" song. Though "he is a common worker," Mr. Block is not ready to accept nor act upon his class position. As a consequence, his life is a compound of one error after another. Joe Hill tells his audience: Learn from the errors of Mr. Block. Go thou and do NOT do likewise.

The verse dealing with Mr. Block's adventures with the job shark is critical of crooked employment agencies and the law which protected their shady practices. These agencies, on the promise of a job, would first extract their employment fee and then either would deliver no job at all, or a job which would last a very short time. These agency sharks did everything possible to create a rapid labor turnover in order to swell their fees.

The verse about the A.F. of L. is indicative of the I.W.W. position which was critical of A.F. of L. policy.

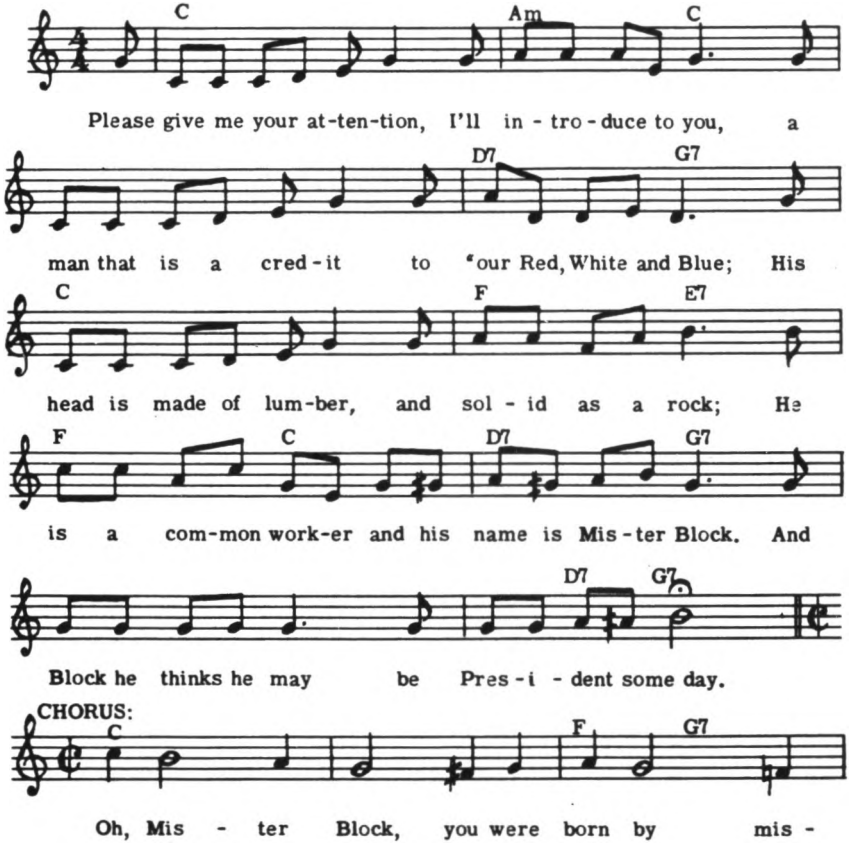
The election day verse is reflective of the I.W.W. position toward the electoral system and the ballot. They believed that the working class could finally take power only by direct battle with the employing class in the shop and on the picket-line. As a means of taking power, they considered the electoral system and the vote a snare and a delusion.

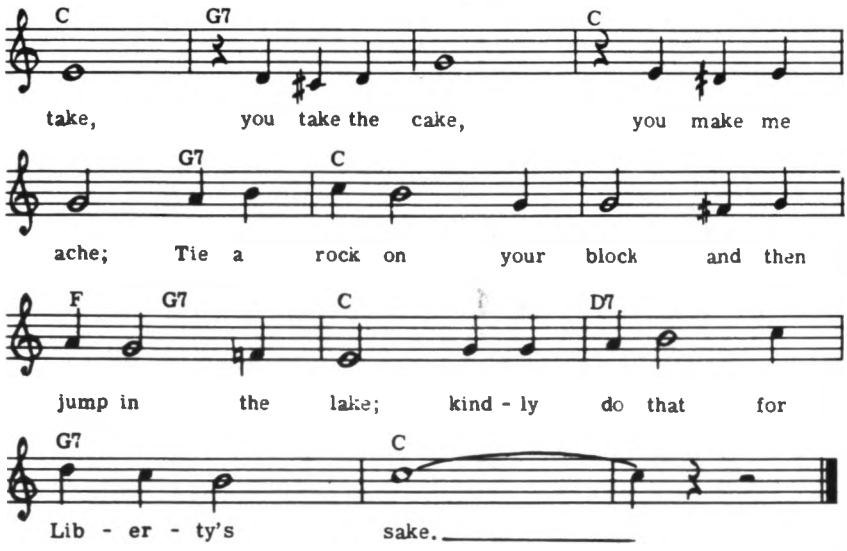
"Mr. Block" was enormously popular. Working people sang it from one end of the country to the other. In "The Man Who Never Died," I give various examples of how this song was used as an instrument to organize the workers and as a means to hold the men together. Here is one instance of the uses to which the song was put:

Dr. Carleton H. Parker of the University of California and secretary of the State Commission of Immigration and Housing, in reporting about the hop-pickers' strike in Wheatland, California, tells how the coordinating force of

the strikers was a group of thirty men who constituted a camp local of the Industrial Workers of the World. He goes on to say:

> "It is a deeply suggestive fact that these thirty men through their energy, technique and skill in organization unified and dominated an unhomogeneous mass of two thousand eight hundred unskilled laborers within two days... . When the fracas with the sheriff's posse occurred the crowd was singing an I.W.W. song called "Mr. Block," which it is obvious a large number must have known. This knowledge of I.W.W. songs is widespread among . . . migratory laborers of the state, and is a new phenonemon, certainly not more than three years old."

Two extremely popular songs of the '30's, "He's A Fool," written by members of Local 65 in New York, and "I Belong to the Company Union" by Maurice Sugar, are directly in the tradition of "Mr. Block."

C
Am
C
Please give me your at-ten-tion, I'll in - tro - duce to you, a
D7
G7
man that is a cred - it to our Red, White and Blue; His
C
F
E7
head is made of lum-ber, and sol - id as a rock; He
F
C
D7
G7
is a com-mon work-er and his name is Mis - ter Block. And
D7
G7
Block he thinks he may be Pres - i - dent some day.
CHORUS:
C
F
G7
Oh, Mis - ter Block, you were born by mis -


C G7 C
take, you take the cake, you make me
G7 C
ache; Tie a rock on your block and then
F G7 C D7
jump in the lake; kind - ly do that for
G7 C
Lib - er - ty's sake.

Yes, Mr. Block is lucky; he found a job, by gee!
The shark got seven dollars, for job add fare and fee.
They shipped him to a desert and dumped him with his truck,
But when he tried to find his job, he sure was out of luck.
He shouted, "That's too raw,
"I'll fix them with the law!" (Chorus)

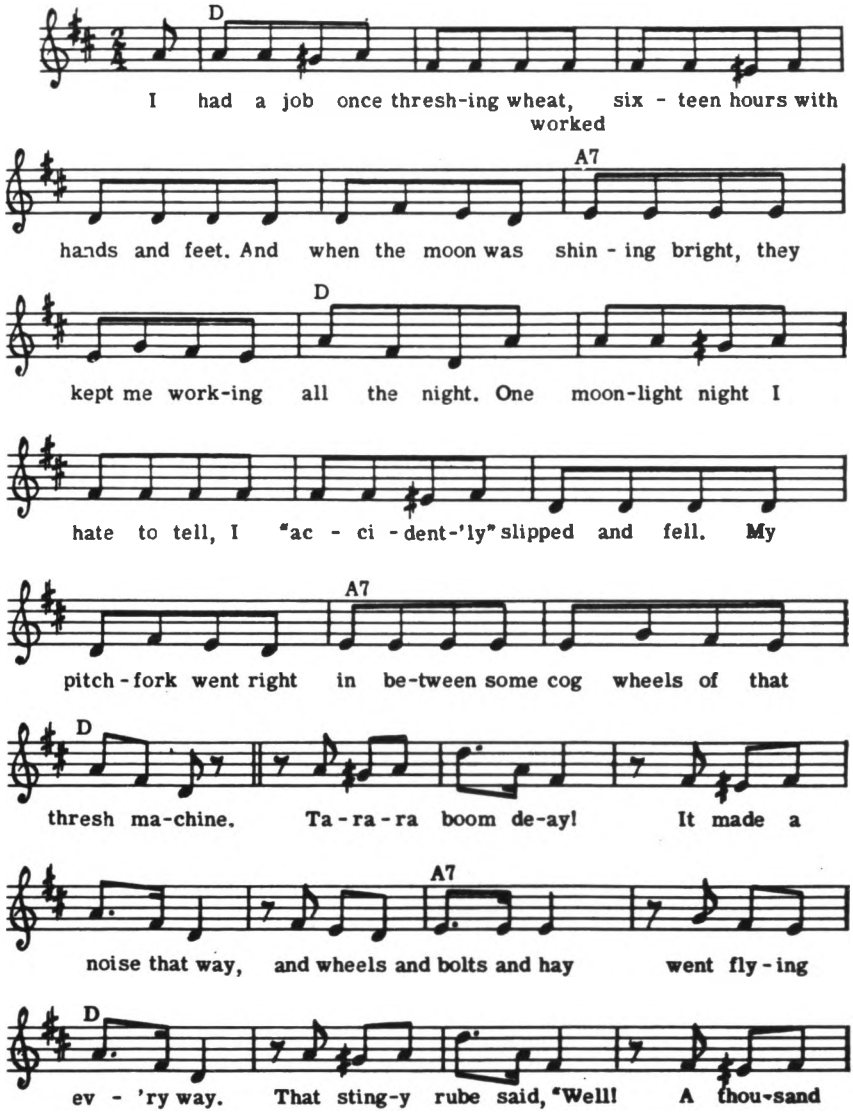
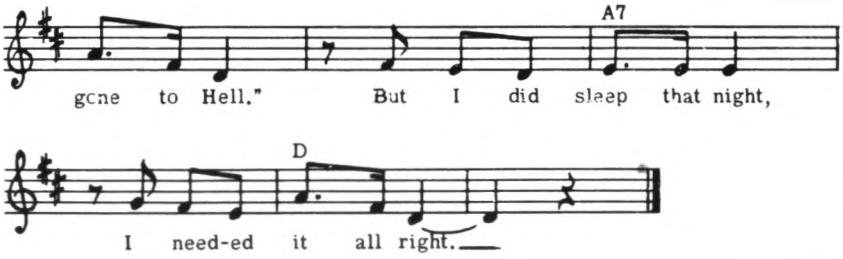
Block hiked back to the city, but wasn't doing well.
He said, "I'll join the union -- the great A. F. of L."
He got a job next morning, got fired in the night,
He said, "I'll see Sam Gompers and he'll fix that foreman right."
Sam Gompers said, "You see,
"You've got our sympathy." (Chorus)

Election Day he shouted, "A Socialist for Mayor!"
The "comrade" got elected, he happy was for fair.
But after the election, he got an awful shock;
A great big socialistic "bull" did rap him on the block.
And Comrade Block did sob,
"I helped him to his job." (Chorus)

The money kings in Cuba blew up the gunboat Maine,
But Block got awful angry and blamed it all on Spain.
He went right in the battle and there he lost his leg,
And now he's peddling shoestrings and is walking on a peg.
He shouts, "Remember Maine,
"Hurrah! To hell with Spain!" (Chorus)

Poor Block he died one evening, I'm very glad to state;
He climbed the golden ladder up to the pearly gate.
He said, "Oh, Mr. Peter, one word I'd like to tell,
"I'd like to meet the Astorbilts and John D. Rockefell."
Old Pete said, "Is that so?
"You'll meet them down below." (Chorus)

Ta-ra-ra Boom De-ay

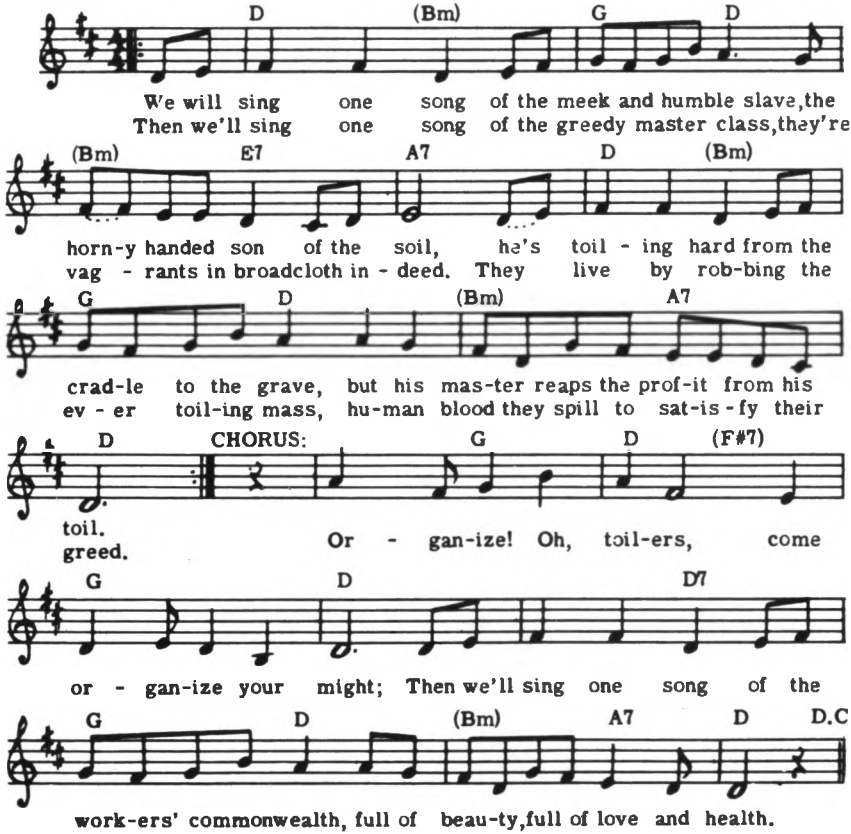
This is another humorous narrative ballad in the tradition of "Casey Jones" and "Stung Right." It appeared in the 1916 Little Red Song Book, although it was written much earlier.

D
I had a job once thresh-ing wheat, six - teen hours with worked
A7
hands and feet. And when the moon was shin - ing bright, they
D
kept me work-ing all the night. One moon-light night I
hate to tell, I "ac - ci - dent-'ly" slipped and fell. My
A7
pitch - fork went right in be-tween some cog wheels of that
D
thresh ma-chine. Ta - ra - ra boom de-ay! It made a
A7
noise that way, and wheels and bolts and hay went fly - ing
D
ev - 'ry way. That sting-y rube said, "Well! A thou-sand

Next day that stingy rube did say, "I'll bring my eggs to town today;
"You grease my wagon up, you mutt, and don't forget to screw the nut."
I greased his wagon all right, but, I plumb forgot to screw the nut.
And when he started on that trip, the wheel slipped off and broke his hip.
Ta-ra-ra boom de-ay! It made a noise that way.
That rube was sure a sight, and mad enough to fight;
His whiskers and his legs were full of scrambled eggs;
I told him, "That's too bad -- I'm feeling very sad."

And then that farmer said, "You turk! I bet you are an I-Won't-Work."
He paid me off right there, By Gum! So I went home and told my chum.
Next day when threshing did commence, my chum was Johnny on the fence;
And 'pon my word, that awkward kid, he dropped his pitchfork, like I did.
Ta-ra-ra boom de-ay! It made a noise that way,
And part of that machine hit Reuben on the bean.
He cried, "Oh me, oh my; I nearly lost my eye."
My partner said, "You're right -- It's bedtime now, good night."

But still that rube was pretty wise, these things did open up his eyes.
He said, "There must be something wrong; I think I work my men too long."
He cut the hours and raised the pay, gave ham and egg for every day,
Now gets his men from union hall, and has no "accidents" at all.
Ta-ra-ra boom de-ay! That rube is feeling gay;
He learned his lesson quick, just through a simple trick.
For fixing rotten jobs and fixing greedy slobs,
This is the only way, Ta-ra-ra boom de-ay!

(Photostatic reproduction of the masthead of the I.W.W. newspaper, Solidarity. Notice that the letters are formed by tools of labor.)

We Will Sing One Song

Almost all of Joe Hill's songs are sardonic, witty, jolly or boisterous -- or a combination of several of these. This poem, however, is quite solemn, and though somewhat sentimental, has genuine dignity and depth of feeling. There is also the curious admixture of a "poetic" phrase such as "make the welkin ring with our applause" to be found side by side with the concrete word pictures we associate with Joe Hill's style. The melody is Stephen Foster's "My Old Kentucky Home."

D (Bm) G D
We will sing one song of the meek and humble slave, the
Then we'll sing one song of the greedy master class, they're
(Bm) E7 A7 D (Bm)
horn-y handed son of the soil, he's toil - ing hard from the
vag - rants in broadcloth in - deed. They live by rob-bing the
G D (Bm) A7
crad-le to the grave, but his mas-ter reaps the prof-it from his
ev - er toil-ing mass, hu-man blood they spill to sat-is - fy their
D CHORUS: G D (F#7)
toil.
greed. Or - gan-ize! Oh, toil-ers, come
G D D7
or - gan-ize your might; Then we'll sing one song of the
G D (Bm) A7 D D.C
work-ers' commonwealth, full of beau-ty, full of love and health.

We will sing one song of the politician sly,
He's talking of changing the laws;
Election day all the drinks and smokes he'll buy,
While we make the welkin ring with our applause.
Then we'll sing one song of the girl below the line,
She's scorned and despised everywhere,
While in their mansions the "keepers" wine and dine
From the profits that immoral traffic bear. (Chorus)

We will sing one song of the preacher, fat and sleek,
He tells you of homes in the sky.
He says, "Be generous, be lowly and meek,
"If you don't you'll sure get roasted when you die."
Then we'll sing one song of the poor and ragged tramp,
He carries his home on his back;
Too old to work, he's not wanted 'round the camp,
So he wanders without aim along the track. (Chorus)

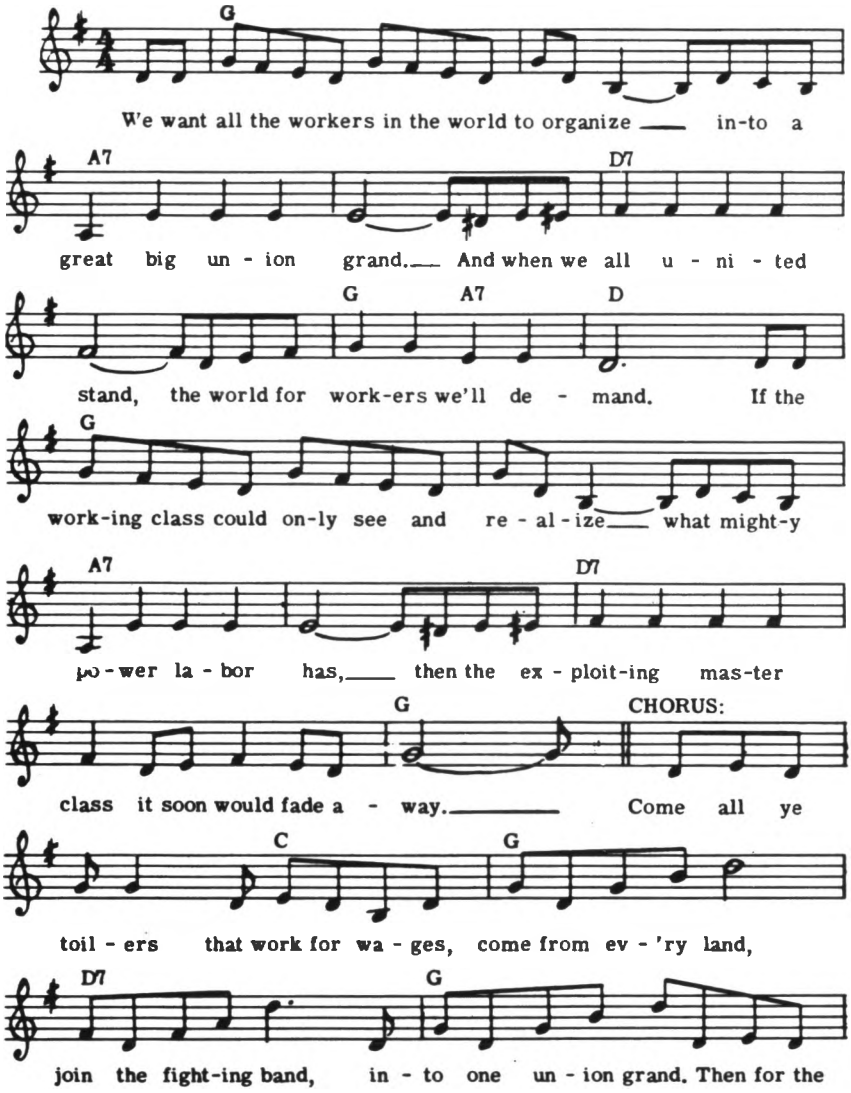
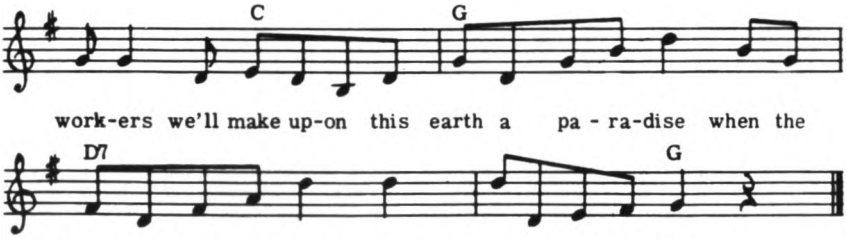
We will sing one song of the children in the mills,
They're taken from playgrounds and schools,
In tender years made to go the pace that kills,
In the sweatshops, 'mong the looms and the spools.
Then we'll sing one song of the One Big Union Grand,
The hope of the toiler and slave,
It's coming fast! It is sweeping sea and land,
To the terror of the grafter and knave. (Chorus)

Let Bill Do It

This first appeared during October, 1912, in the I.W.W. newspaper, The Industrial Worker. Directly beneath the title of the poem, the following is to be found in parentheses: "Written by J. Hill, and dedicated to those who have nothing to lose but their chairs." That last word is NOT a misprint!

Hey, all you girls and fellows
That do depend on Bill
To do your work and duties,
I'll put you next, I will.
I'll put you next to Billy,
I've known him since the 'Quake;
Of all the Weary Willies,
That guy, he takes the cake.
He is so gol durn lazy
He wouldn't do a tap'
I rather would depend on
Some fool Missouri yap.
Now take my tip, you workers
That slave in mine and mill,
And never do depend upon
That good for nothing Bill.

What We Want

In this song there are no scabs, no preachers with false promises, no Mr. Blocks and Scissor Bills, no bosses of the greedy master class, no bulls with clubs, no "pinks," no sluggers, no politicians. There is only the working class of the whole world engaged in the multitude of their tasks. And the song is a great joyous plea, a clarion call, for all of them to join the O. B. U. -- the One Big Union.

G
We want all the workers in the world to organize — in-to a
A7
D7
great big un - ion grand.— And when we all u - ni - ted
G
A7
D
stand, the world for work-ers we'll de - mand. If the
G
work-ing class could on-ly see and re - al - ize— what might-y
A7
D7
po - wer la - bor has,— then the ex - ploit-ing mas-ter
G
CHORUS:
class it soon would fade a - way.— Come all ye
C
G
toil - ers that work for wa - ges, come from ev - 'ry land,
D7
G
join the fight-ing band, in - to one un - ion grand. Then for the

We want the sailor and tailor and the lumberjack,
And all the cooks and laundry girls,
We want the guy that dives for pearls,
The pretty maid that's making curls,
And the baker and the staker and the chimney sweep,
We want the man that's slinging hash,
The child that works for little cash,
In one union grand. (Chorus)

We want the tinner and skinner and the chambermaid,
We want the man that spikes our soles,
We want the man that's digging holes,
We want the man that's climbing poles,
And the trucker and the mucker and the hired man
And all the factory girls and clerks.
Yes, we want everyone that works
In one union grand. (Chorus)

The Tramp

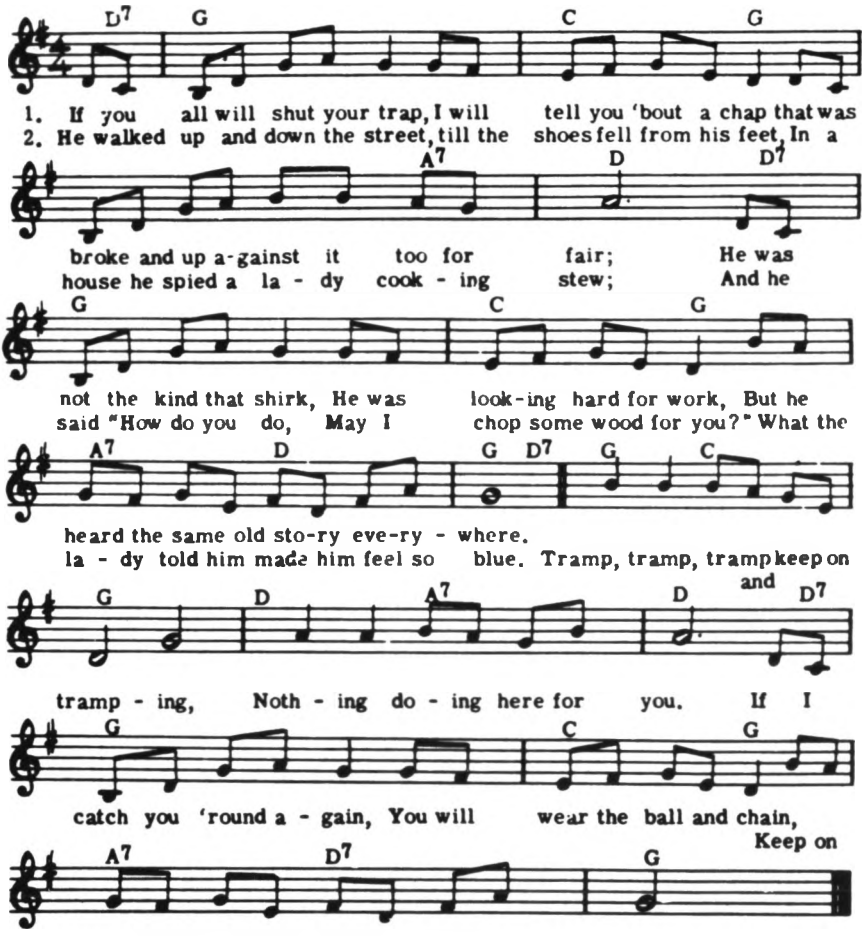
"A tramp" in Joe Hill's time had a different connotation from the meaning ascribed to it today. In those days "a tramp" was a man out of work and "tramping about" searching for a job.

The depression started in 1908 and continued for many years -- a slow creeping depression which was to engulf ever larger sections of the country and was to continue inexorably until the outbreak of World War I helped the sick economy back on its feet. In "The Tramp," Joe Hill humorously, yet sardonically, recounts the mis-adventures of an unemployed worker who has become a tramp looking for any kind of work.

Visualize, if you can, Joe Hill facing a large and noisy crowd, getting up on a soapbox to begin a street meeting. He begins his song with "If you all will shut your trap," waits as the audience quiets down and then plunges into his narrative with: "I will tell you about a chap." In his earlier song, "Mr. Block," Joe Hill began with "Please give me your attention." Now he uses the stronger "shut your trap." This call to come together is an old attention-getting folk device. Countless sea chanties start with "Come all ye Sailor boys," and cowboy songs with "Gather 'round, boys."

Joe Hill loved to develop his stories to that final and inevitable end where his main character goes up to heaven and/or down to hell. He did this in "Casey Jones," "Mr. Block," "Scissor Bill" and does it again here.

The melody, of course, is George F. Root's popular "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, The Boys Are Tramping," which was written during the Civil War.

(The song, "The Tramp," appears on the following page.)

D7 G C G
1. If you all will shut your trap, I will tell you 'bout a chap that was
2. He walked up and down the street, till the shoes fell from his feet, In a
A7 D D7
broke and up a-gainst it too for fair; He was
house he spied a la - dy cook - ing stew; And he
G C G
not the kind that shirk, He was look-ing hard for work, But he
said "How do you do, May I chop some wood for you?" What the
A7 D G D7 G C
heard the same old sto-ry eve-ry - where.
la - dy told him made him feel so blue. Tramp, tramp, tramp keep on
and
G D A7 D D7
tramp - ing, Noth - ing do - ing here for you. If I
G C G
catch you 'round a - gain, You will wear the ball and chain,
Keep on
A7 D7 G
tramp-ing that's the best thing you can do.

'Cross the road a sign he read,
"Work for Jesus," so it said,
And he said, "Here is my chance, I'll surely try,"
So he kneeled upon the floor
Till his knees got rather sore,
But at eating time he heard the preacher cry: (Chorus)

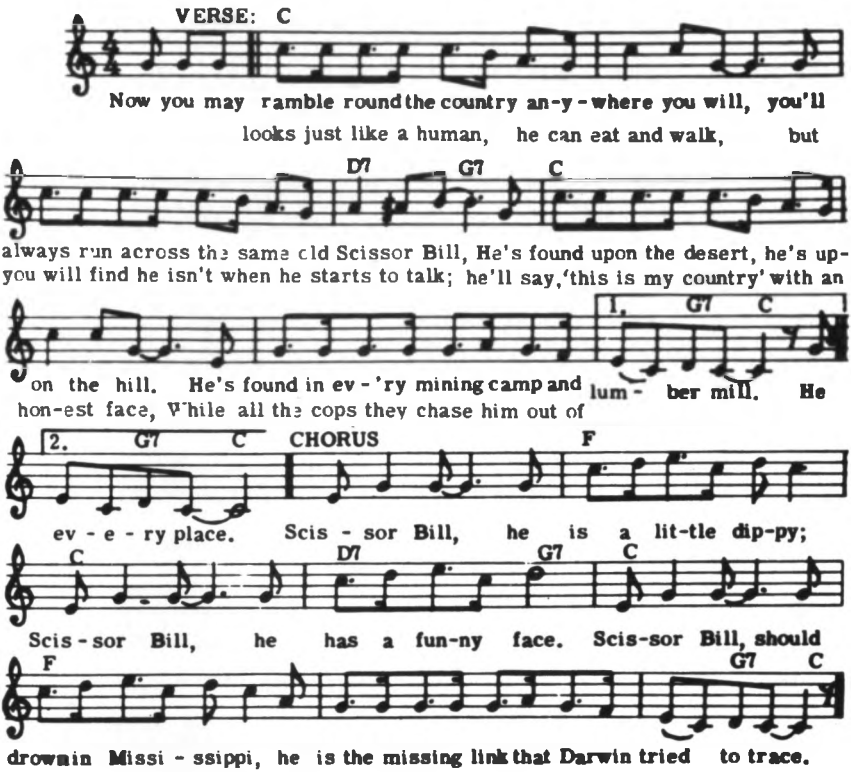
Down the street he met a cop,
And the copper made him stop,
And he asked him, "When did you blow into town?
"Come with me up to the judge,"
But the judge he said, "Oh fudge,
"Bums that have no money needn't come around." (Chorus)

Finally came that happy day,
When his life did pass away,
He was sure he'd go to heaven when he died.
When he reached the Pearly Gate,
Santa Peter, mean old skate,
Slammed the gate right in his face and loudly cried: (Chorus)

In despair he went to Hell,
With the Devil for to dwell,
For the reason he'd no other place to go.
And he said, "I'm full of sin,
"So for Christ's sake, let me in!"
But the Devil said, "Oh beat it, you're a 'bo." (Chorus)

Scissor Bill

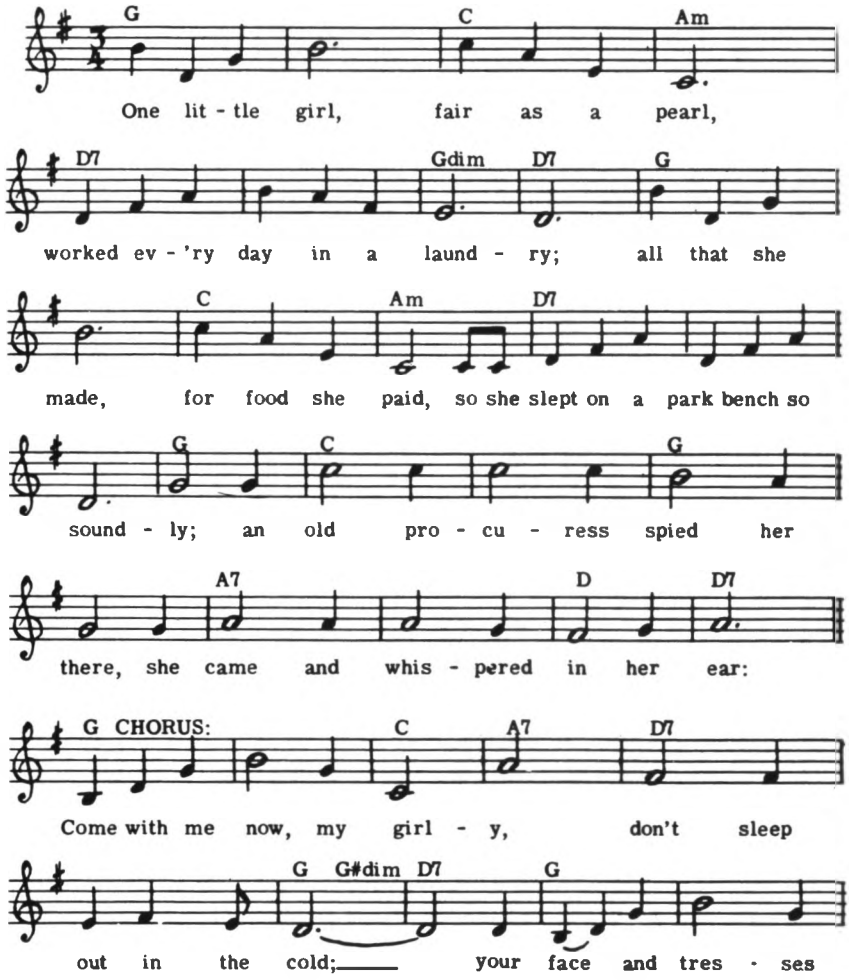
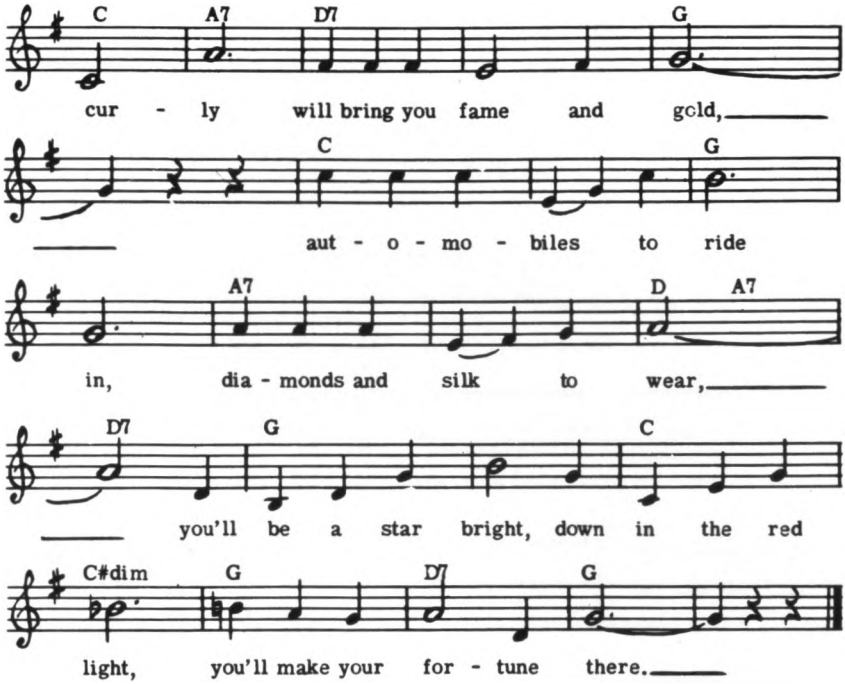
"Scissor Bill," like "Mr. Block," is another character who refuses to understand his class interests as a workingman. However, there is an essential difference in the development of these two songs. In "Mr. Block," Joe Hill traces the mis-adventures of Block step by step in narrative form; but "Scissor Bill" is a "summary story," wherein Joe Hill gives his own evaluation of Bill's character and brain. Notice though, that both of them are consigned to a common end -- a watery grave; Block in a lake and Scissor Bill in the Mississippi.


VERSE: C
Now you may ramble round the country an-y-where you will, you'll
looks just like a human, he can eat and walk, but
D7 G7 C
always run across the same old Scissor Bill, He's found upon the desert, he's up-
you will find he isn't when he starts to talk; he'll say,'this is my country' with an
1. G7 C
on the hill. He's found in ev-'ry mining camp and lum-ber mill. He
hon-est face, While all the cops they chase him out of
2. G7 C CHORUS F
ev-e-ry place. Scis-sor Bill, he is a lit-tle dip-py;
C D7 G7 C
Scis-sor Bill, he has a fun-ny face. Scis-sor Bill, should
F G7 C
drownin Missi-ssippi, he is the missing link that Darwin tried to trace.

Don't try to talk your union dope to Scissor Bill,
He says he never organized and never will.
He always will be satisfied until he's dead,
With coffee and a doughnut and a lousy old bed.
And Bill he says he'll get rewarded a thousandfold,
When he gets up to Heaven on the streets of gold;
But I don't care who knows it and right here I'll tell,
If Scissor Bill is going to Heaven, I will go to Hell.

Scissor Bill, he wouldn't join the union;
Scissor Bill, he says, "Not me, by heck!"
Scissor Bill, gets his reward in Heaven,
Oh, sure, he'll get it, but he'll get it in the neck.

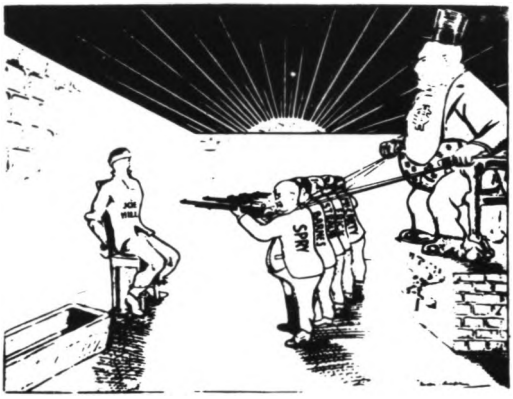
The White Slave

This song is full of the false sentimentalities and cliches of the period. But there is one significant thing which distinguishes "The White Slave" from the mass of sentimental writings on similar themes of the period. Whereas other writers ascribed the downfall of the prostitute to personal failing, weakness or desire, or -- if the writer was charitable to his subject matter -- to an unfortunate series of events, Joe Hill well understood the economic base of prostitution. It is need; it is hunger. "Who is to blame? . . . It's the boss who pays starvation wages."

G C Am
One lit - tle girl, fair as a pearl,
D7 Gdim D7 G
worked ev - 'ry day in a laund - ry; all that she
C Am D7
made, for food she paid, so she slept on a park bench so
G C G
sound - ly; an old pro - cu - ress spied her
A7 D D7
there, she came and whis - pered in her ear:
G CHORUS: C A7 D7
Come with me now, my girl - y, don't sleep
G G#dim D7 G
out in the cold; your face and tres - ses

C A7 D7 G
cur - ly will bring you fame and gold,
C G
aut - o - mo - biles to ride
A7 D A7
in, dia - monds and silk to wear,
D7 G C
you'll be a star bright, down in the red
C#dim G D7 G
light, you'll make your for - tune there.

Same little girl, no more a pearl,
Walks all alone 'long the river;
Five years have flown, her health is gone,
She would look at the water and shiver;
When'er she'd stop to rest and sleep,
She'd hear a voice call from the deep:
-Chorus-

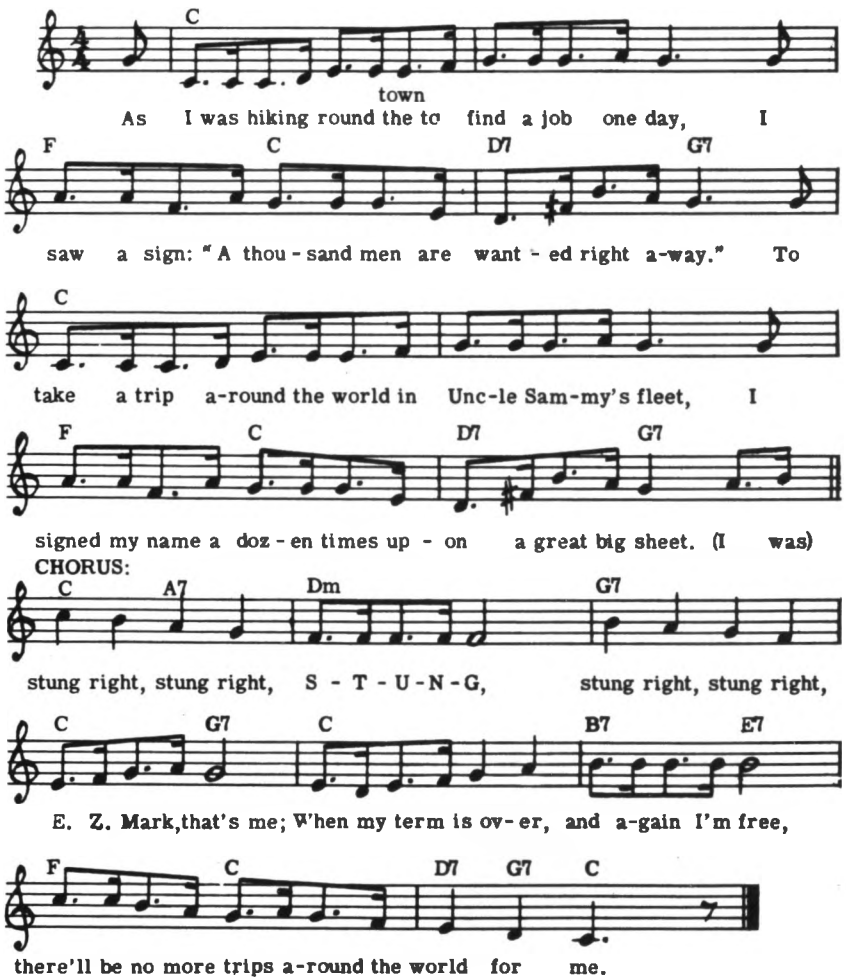
Girls in this way, fall every day,
And have been falling for ages.
Who is to blame? You know his name,
It's the boss that pays starvation wages.
A homeless girl can always hear
Temptations calling everywhere.
-Chorus-

The Firing Squad With The Screen Removed



(Photostatic reproduction of Ralph Chaplin's famous cartoon depicting the Utah Board of Pardons as responsible for the death of Joe Hill.)

Stung Right

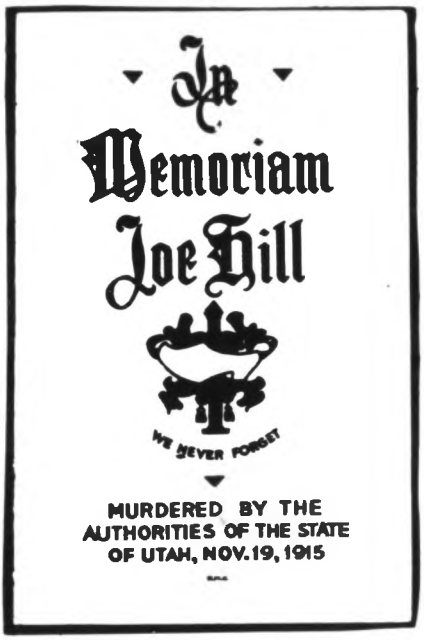
Here again we have a humorous narrative ballad, this time of the man without a job who joins the Navy under the delusion that he will have a life of ease during his term of enlistment. Once he is in, he discovers that sometimes recruiting posters exaggerate!

C
town
As I was hiking round the to find a job one day, I
F C D7 G7
saw a sign: "A thou - sand men are want - ed right a-way." To
C
take a trip a-round the world in Unc-le Sam-my's fleet, I
F C D7 G7
signed my name a doz - en times up - on a great big sheet. (I was)
CHORUS:
C A7 Dm G7
stung right, stung right, S - T - U - N - G, stung right, stung right,
C G7 C B7 E7
E. Z. Mark, that's me; When my term is ov - er, and a-gain I'm free,
F C D7 G7 C
there'll be no more trips a-round the world for me.

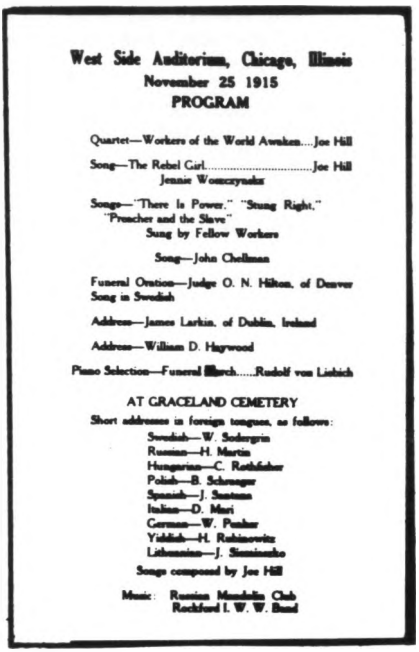
The man, he said, "The U. S. Fleet, it is no place for slaves,
"For everything you have to do is stand and watch the waves!"
But in the morn, at five o'clock, they woke me from my snooze,
To scrub the deck and polish brass, and shine the captain's shoes! (Chorus)

One day a dude in uniform to me began to shout;
I simply plugged him in the jaw, and knocked him down and out;
They slammed me right in irons then and said, "You are a case."
On bread and water then I lived for twenty-seven days. (Chorus)

One day the captain said, "Today I'll show you something nice,
"All hands line up, we'll go ashore and do some exercise."
He made us run for seven miles as fast as we could run,
And with a packing on our back that weighed a half a ton.' (Chorus)

Some time ago when Uncle Sam he had a war with Spain,
And many of the boys in blue were in the battle slain,
Not all were killed by bullets, though; no, not by any means,
The biggest part that died were killed by Armour's Pork and Beans. (Chorus)




West Side Auditorium, Chicago, Illinois
November 25 1915
PROGRAM

Quartet—Workers of the World Awaken.....Joe Hill

Song—The Rebel Girl.....Joe Hill
Jennie Wonczyruska

Songs—"There Is Power," "Stung Right,"
"Preacher and the Slave"
Sung by Fellow Workers

Song—John Chellman

Funeral Oration—Judge O. N. Hilton, of Denver
Song in Swedish

Address—James Larkin, of Dublin, Ireland

Address—William D. Haywood

Piano Selection—Funeral March.....Rudolf von Liebich

AT GRACELAND CEMETERY

Short addresses in foreign tongues, as follows:
Swedish—W. Sodergren
Russian—H. Martin
Hungarian—C. Rothfisher
Polish—B. Schwager
Spanish—J. Santoss
Italian—D. Mori
German—W. Parker
Yiddish—H. Rabinowitz
Lithuanian—J. Simonaska

Songs composed by Joe Hill

Music: Russian Mandolin Club
Rockford I. W. W. Band

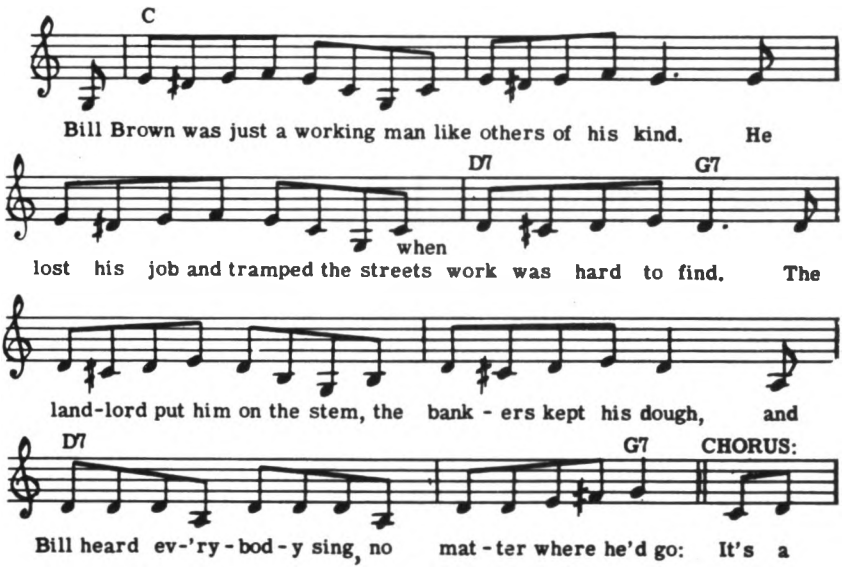
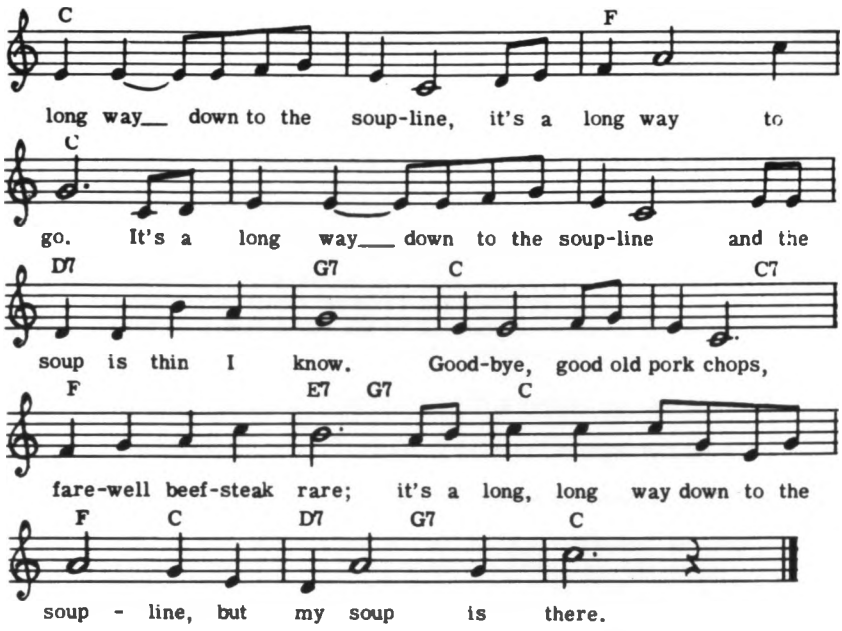
(Photostatic reproduction of the official program at the Joe Hill Memorial Services in Chicago, November 25th, 1915.)

It's A Long Way Down To The Soupline

By 1914 the depression was a black scourge on the face of the land. Families were thrown out on the street. Jobs were not to be had. Tramps moved from city to city looking for jobs -- as though the depression was a regional or local blight and not a national scourge. Coupled to this was the bitter situation of the sharp rise in food prices. The war had started in Europe and food speculators were paying any price demanded, knowing that they would be able to unload at still higher prices. Soup kitchens, the shame of so wealthy a nation, began to crop up all across the country. Larger and ever larger lines of hungry men, women and children were to be found waiting for their dole of a piece of bread and a bowl of soup. In November, 1914, while Joe Hill was in prison on the framed murder charge, his friend Sam Murray wrote him from California asking him to write a song protesting the hunger and unemployment. Sam Murray suggested that it be parodied to the music of "It's A Long Way To Tipperary," then very popular with the soldiers of the British Army. Joe Hill replied:

> "No, I have not heard that song about 'Tipperary' but if you send it as you said you would I might try to dope something out about that Frisco Fair. I am not familiar with the actual conditions of Frisco at present; and when I make a song I always try to picture things as they really are. Of course a little pepper and salt is allowed in order to bring out the facts more clearly."

Soon afterwards, the Soupline song was sung up and down the West Coast.


C
Bill Brown was just a working man like others of his kind. He
D7
G7
when
lost his job and tramped the streets work was hard to find. The
land-lord put him on the stem, the bank - ers kept his dough, and
D7
G7
CHORUS:
Bill heard ev-'ry - bod - y sing, no mat - ter where he'd go: It's a

So Bill and sixteen million men responded to the call
To force the hours of labor down and thus make jobs for all.
They picketed the industries and won the four-hour day,
And organized a General Strike so men don't have to say: (Chorus)

The workers own the factories now, where jobs were once destroyed
By big machines that filled the world with hungry unemployed.
They all own homes, they're living well, they're happy, free and strong,
But millionaires wear overalls and sing this little song: (Chorus)

It's A Long Way Down To The Breadline

A few months later, Joe Hill wrote to Sam Murray:

> "Yes, that Tipperary song is spreading like the smallpox they say. . . . The unemployed all over the country have adopted it as a marching song in their parades, and in New York City they changed it to some extent so as to fit the brand of soup dished out in N. Y."

I.W.W. organizer, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, then active among the unemployed in New York City, wrote to Joe Hill asking permission to have his song changed to fit the needs of New York. Joe Hill replied:

"So the Soupline Song made its way clear across the continent. . . . If F(ellow) W(orker) Ashleigh wants to change the Soupline Song to make it fit the brand of soup they are dishing out in N.Y. he can hop right to it."

I searched for Charles Ashleigh's adaptation of Joe Hill's song without success. Then out of the blue I received a letter from Ashleigh, now living in England. He came across "The Man Who Never Died" and communicated with me. He writes:

"I'm sending you a copy of my amended version of the soupline song -- with us in N.Y. it became the "Breadline.' It is (on) a red card with the song on one side and on the other, quotations from Cardinal Manning, Fr. Bernard Vaughan, Oscar Wilde and Jesus' instruction to his Disciples, all to the effect that a starving man has a RIGHT to his neighbors' bread. . . ."

There is also the following line on the card:

I.W.W. Unemployed Union, 64 E. 4th St., N.Y.C. All Welcome!

And Charles Ashleigh writes further:

"It'd be wonderful (except for the people who live in it) if that crummy old tenement building at 64 E. 4th still stands! Go down and have a look at it. In hot weather we used to sleep out on the roof, the grey-backs and bed-bugs were so active down below."

Here it is: Charles Ashleigh's version, the "Breadline" Song.

Bill Brown lived in Manhattan, in good old New York town.
The poor guy lost his job one day, no more work could be found.
Bill Brown tramped the city streets for work the livelong day;
Till finally he went busted flat, then he did sadly say:

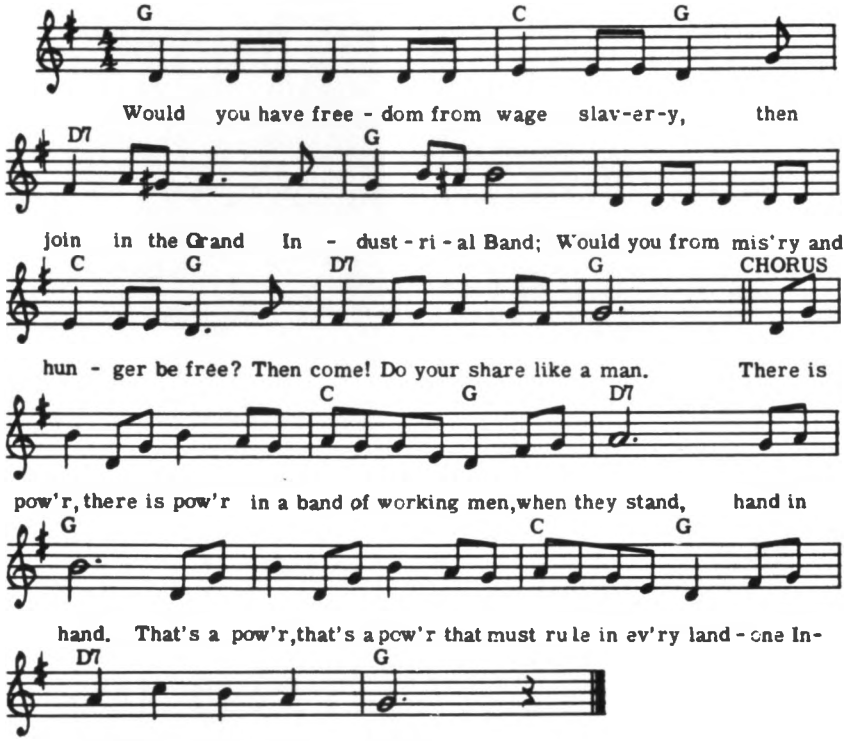
CHORUS:
It's a long way down to the bread line, it's a long way to go.'
It's a long way down to the bread line, and the bread is bum I know.
Good-by, good old pork-chops, farewell beefsteak rare.
It's a long, long way down to the breadline, but my bread's right there.

Bill Brown saw a big fine house, he knocked upon the door.
But they told him that they'd only help the "worthy poor."
"Guess I'll live on snowballs in the town where I was born,
"I haven't got a rusty cent and my clothes are all in pawn." (Chorus)

There's discontent around the town among the sons of toil.
They're all uniting as a class their master's will to foil.
When all is over, men of wealth, with solemn faces long,
Will rue the day they heard the workers sing their latest song:

FINAL CHORUS:
It's a long way down to the bread line, it's a long way to go.
It's a long way down to the bread line -- and much too far, I know.
The bosses have the pork-chops and all the beefsteak rare;
There's plenty there for one and all of us, if we go right there!

There Is Power

This is the second of Joe Hill's recruiting songs; I find it infinitely superior to "Everybody's Joining It." It has felicitous organization; it comes together into a cohesive unit and has sharp, penetrating phrases. The melody is a hymn, "There Is Power In The Blood of the Lamb," which was (and still is) enormously popular.

G C G
Would you have free - dom from wage slav-er-y, then
D7 G
join in the Grand In - dust - ri - al Band; Would you from mis'ry and
C G D7 G CHORUS
hun - ger be free? Then come! Do your share like a man. There is
C G D7
pow'r, there is pow'r in a band of working men, when they stand, hand in
G C G
hand. That's a pow'r, that's a pow'r that must rule in ev'ry land - one In-
D7 G
dustrial Un - ion Grand.

Would you have mansions of gold in the sky,
And live in a shack, way in the back?
Would you have wings up in heaven to fly,
And starve here with rags on your back? (Chorus)

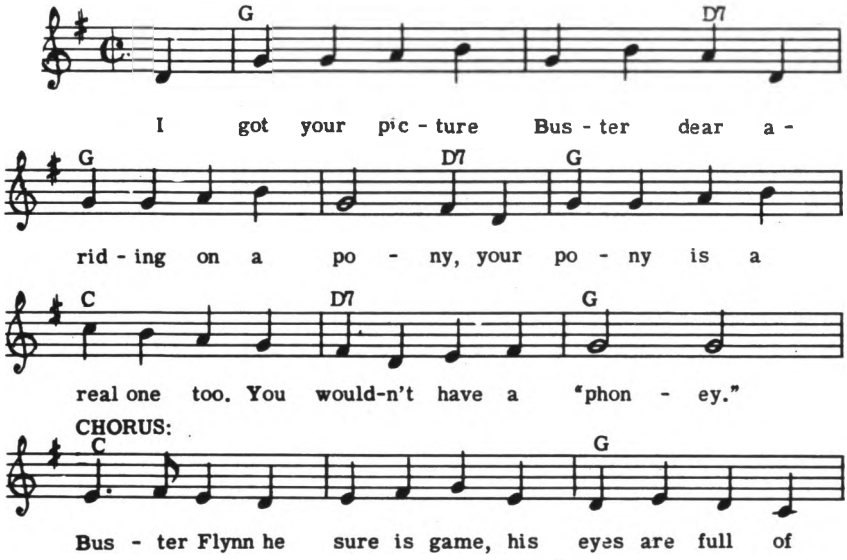
If you've had 'nuff of the "blood of the lamb,"
Then join in the Grand Industrial Band;
If, for a change, you would have eggs and ham,
Then come! Do your share like a man. (Chorus)

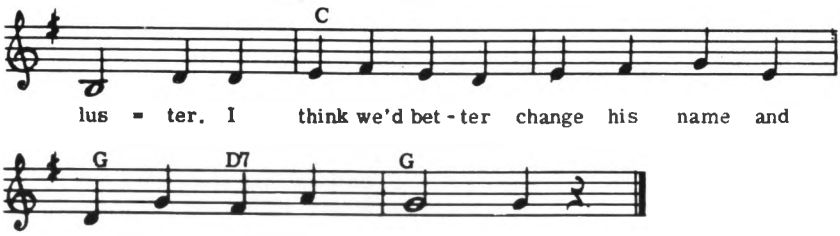
If you like sluggers to beat off your head,
Then don't organize, all unions despise,
If you want nothing before you are dead,
Shake hands with your boss and look wise. (Chorus)

Come all ye workers, from every land,
Come, join in the Grand Industrial Band,
Then we our share of this earth shall demand.
Come on! Do your share like a man. (Chorus)

Bronco Buster Flynn

The friendship between I.W.W. organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Joe Hill ripened through the continuous exchange of letters. In their correspondence, one of the most frequent subjects of discussion was Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's six-year old boy, Fred, nicknamed Buster. During the autumn of 1915, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn sent Joe Hill a picture of Buster which showed the round-faced little boy sitting astride a shaggy Shetland pony. Joe Hill wrote acknowledging the picture: "Rec'd the photo of little Buster and all I had to do was to take one glance at it and immediately knew the reason why you felt so homesick when you made your trip to the Pacific Coast. You certainly have a right to be proud of your boy, he's got a forehead like old Shakespeare himself." And he wrote a special poem for the little boy. Here it is;


G
D7
I got your pic - ture Bus - ter dear a -
G
D7
G
rid - ing on a po - ny, your po - ny is a
C
D7
G
real one too. You would-n't have a "phon - ey."
CHORUS:
C
G
Bus - ter Flynn he sure is game, his eyes are full of



When you grow up to be a man
Be always "rough and ready."
But never brag about it though
Like windy "Bull Moose Teddy."
-Chorus-

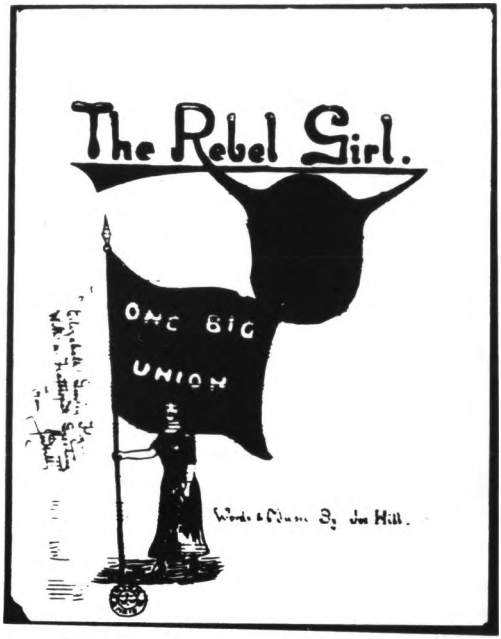
And by and by you'll ride out West
Like Cow-boys that you've read off,
But don't fall off your pony dear
And break your little head off.
-Chorus-

The Rebel Girl

The authorities were mistaken if they thought that putting Joe Hill in jail would silence his pen. During February, 1915, Joe Hill again writes to his friend, Sam Murray: ". . . have been busy working on a song named 'The Rebel Girl' (words and music) which I hope will help to line up the women workers in the O(ne) B(ig) U(nion)."

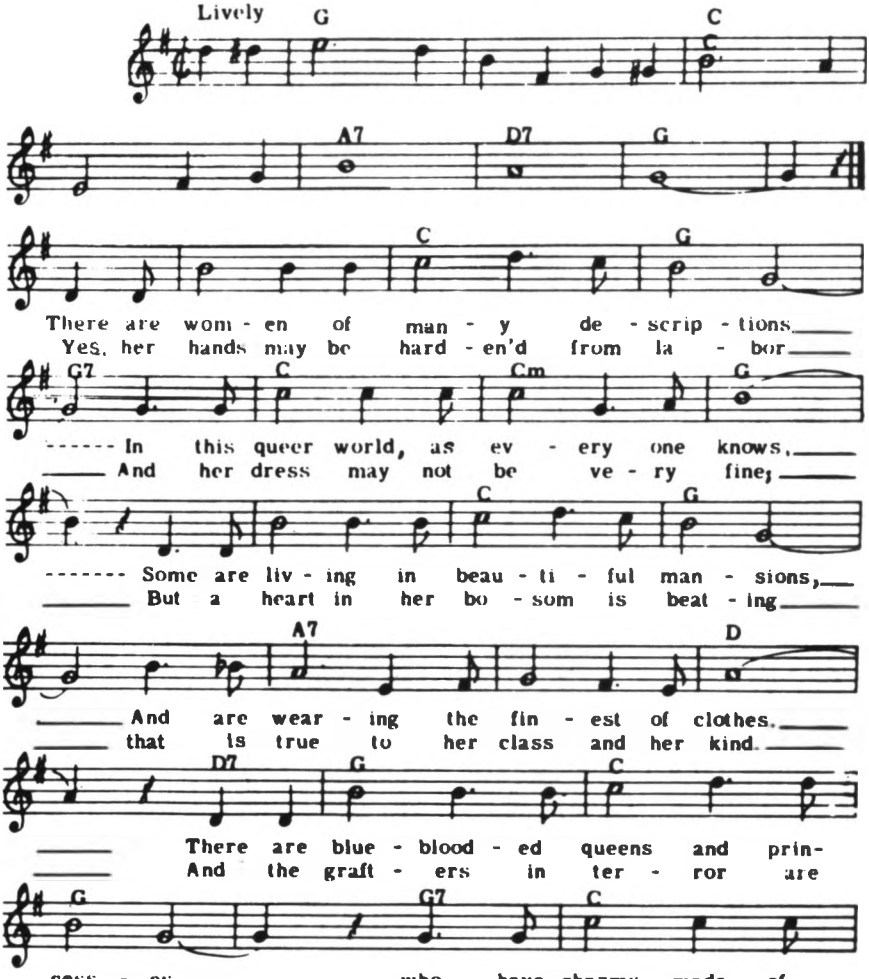
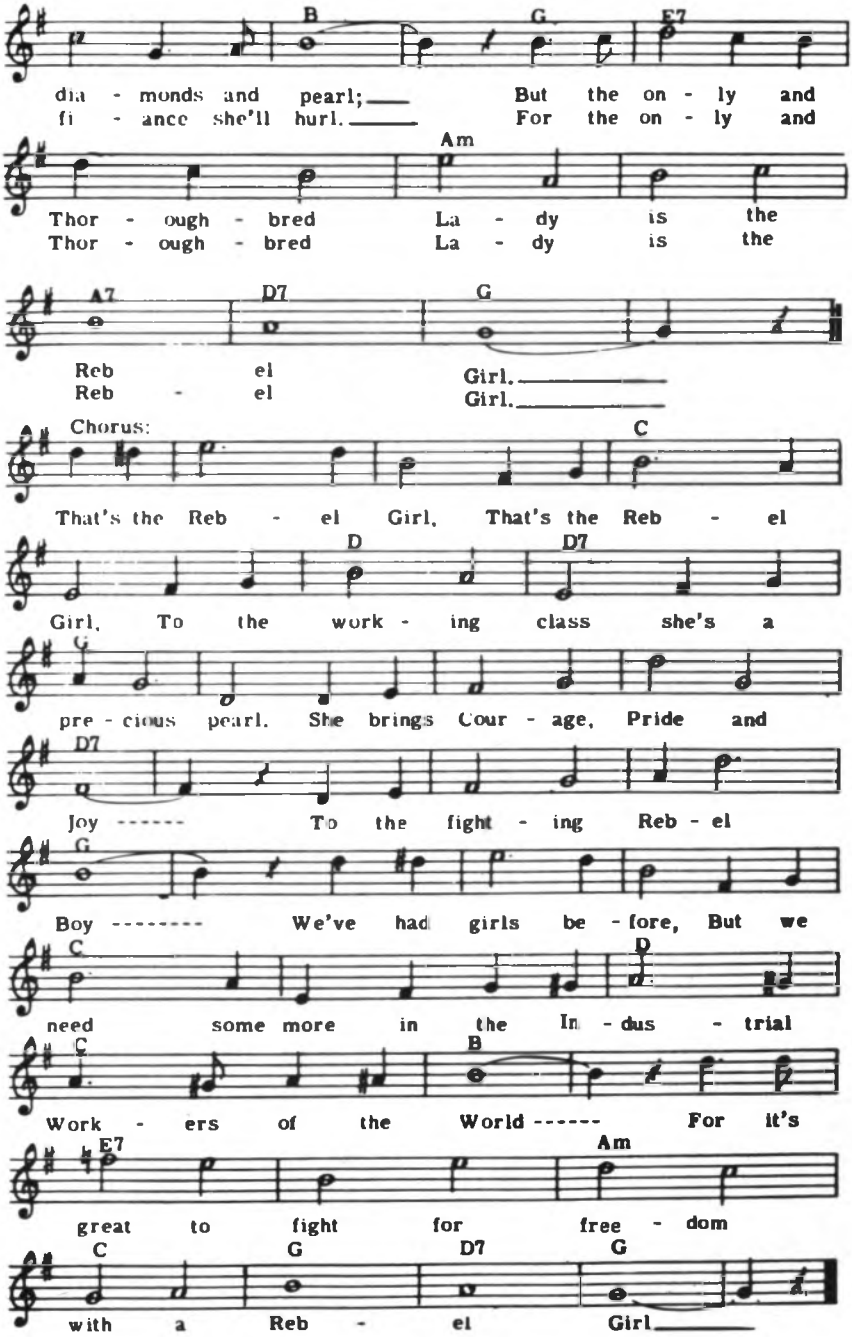
In Joe Hill's time, women were mainly relegated to the kitchen and to low menial jobs. Their role as a basically important element in industrial organization was not understood by most and deliberately distorted by many. Yet, Joe Hill, from behind prison bars, understood the role of women, both on the level of personal relations and the economic structure and wrote a song in honor of "The Rebel Girl."

On the night of November 18, 1915, shortly before 10 o'clock, about nine



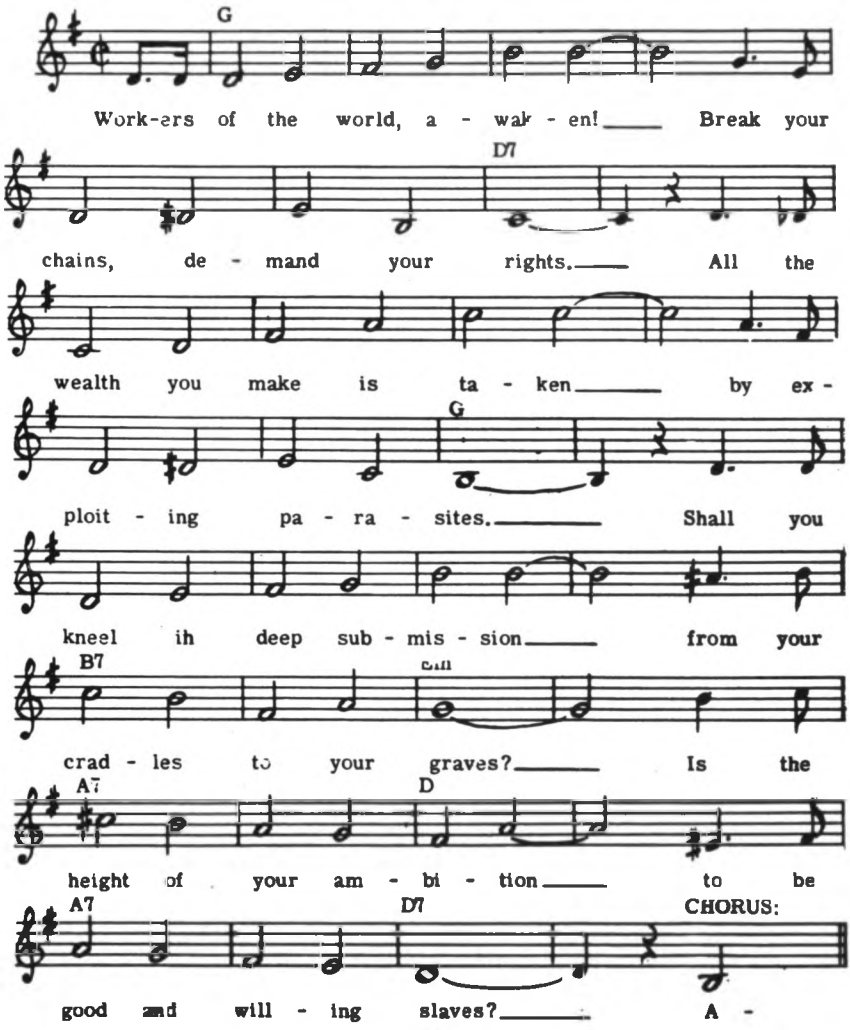
(Photostatic reproduction of the cover of the original manuscript of "The Rebel Girl" including the dedication to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn.)

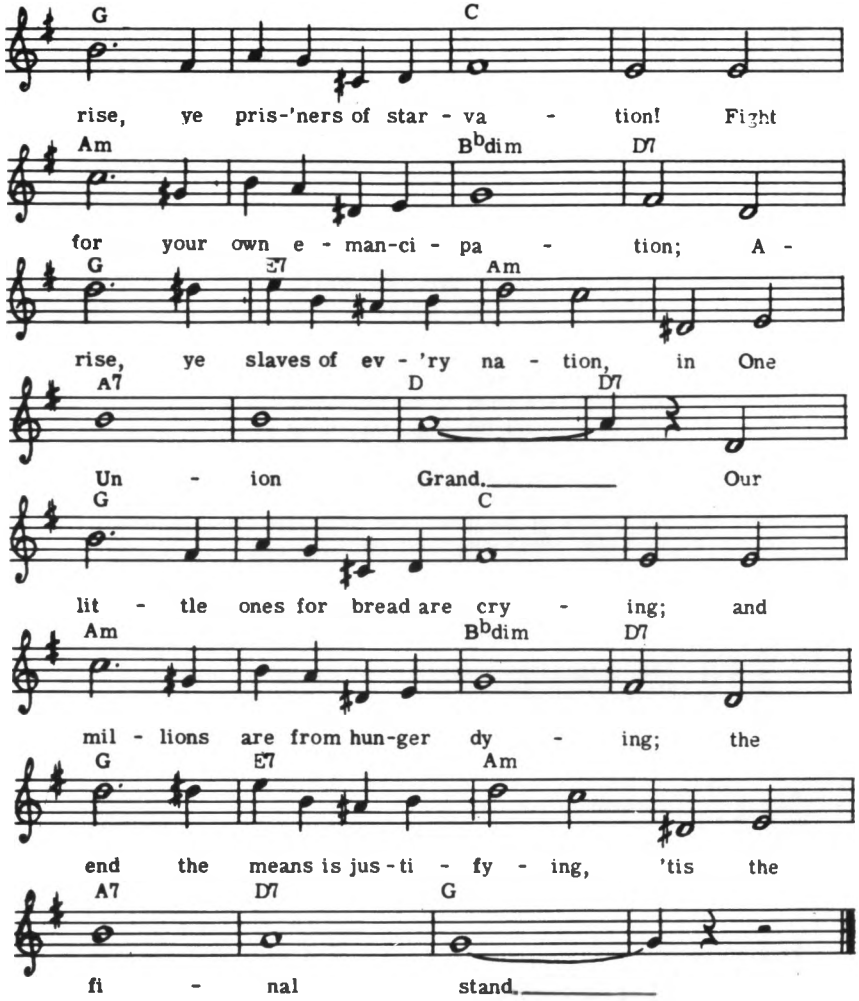
hours before he was going to be shot, he wrote to his dear friend and fellow worker, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn:

> "I just cannot help to send you a few more lines because you have been more to me than a Fellow Worker. You have been an inspiration and when I composed The Rebel Girl you was right there and helped me all the time. As you furnished the idea I will, now that I am gone, give you all the credit for that song, and be sure to locate a few more Rebel Girls like yourself, because they are needed and needed badly. . . . With a warm handshake across the continent and a last fond Good-Bye to All I remain yours as ever Joe Hill."

Lively
G
C
A7
D7
G
C
G
There are wom - en of man - y de - scrip - tions
Yes, her hands may be hard - en'd from la - bor
G7
C
Cm
G
In this queer world, as ev - ery one knows,
And her dress may not be ve - ry fine;
C
G
Some are liv - ing in beau - ti - ful man - sions,
But a heart in her bo - som is beat - ing
A7
D
And are wear - ing the fin - est of clothes.
that is true to her class and her kind.
D7
G
C
There are blue - blood - ed queens and prin-
And the graft - ers in ter - ror are
G
G7
C
cess - es,
who have charms made of
tremb - ling
when her spite and de-

B
G
E7
dia - monds and pearl; But the on - ly and
fi - ance she'll hurl. For the on - ly and
Am
Thor - ough - bred La - dy is the
Thor - ough - bred La - dy is the
A7
D7
G
Reb el Girl.
Reb - el Girl.
Chorus:
C
That's the Reb - el Girl, That's the Reb - el
D
D7
Girl, To the work - ing class she's a
G
pre - cious pearl. She brings Cour - age, Pride and
D7
Joy ------ To the fight - ing Reb - el
G
Boy -------- We've had girls be - fore, But we
C
D
need some more in the In - dus - trial
C
B
Work - ers of the World ------ For it's
E7
Am
great to fight for free - dom
C
G
D7
G
with a Reb - el Girl

Workers of the World, Awaken!

This is another of the songs Joe Hill wrote while in prison. He was able "to slip them out through the bars." Some of this song is derivative of The Internationale, but the other sections are original and have the sharp Joe Hill imprint.

Though written some time earlier, Joe Hill first mentions this song in one of his September, 1915 prison letters. He writes: "On the West Coast . . . Workers of the World Awaken! is making quite a hit, they are telling me."

G
Work-ers of the world, a - wak - en! Break your
D7
chains, de - mand your rights. All the
wealth you make is ta - ken by ex -
G
ploit - ing pa - ra - sites. Shall you
kneel in deep sub - mis - sion from your
B7
Em
crad - les to your graves? Is the
A7
D
height of your am - bi - tion to be
A7
D7
CHORUS:
good and will - ing slaves? A -


G C
rise, ye pris-'ners of star - va - tion! Fight
Am B♭dim D7
for your own e - man-ci - pa - tion; A -
G E7 Am
rise, ye slaves of ev - 'ry na - tion, in One
A7 D D7
Un - ion Grand. Our
G C
lit - tle ones for bread are cry - ing; and
Am B♭dim D7
mil - lions are from hun-ger dy - ing; the
G E7 Am
end the means is jus-ti - fy - ing, 'tis the
A7 D7 G
fi - nal stand.

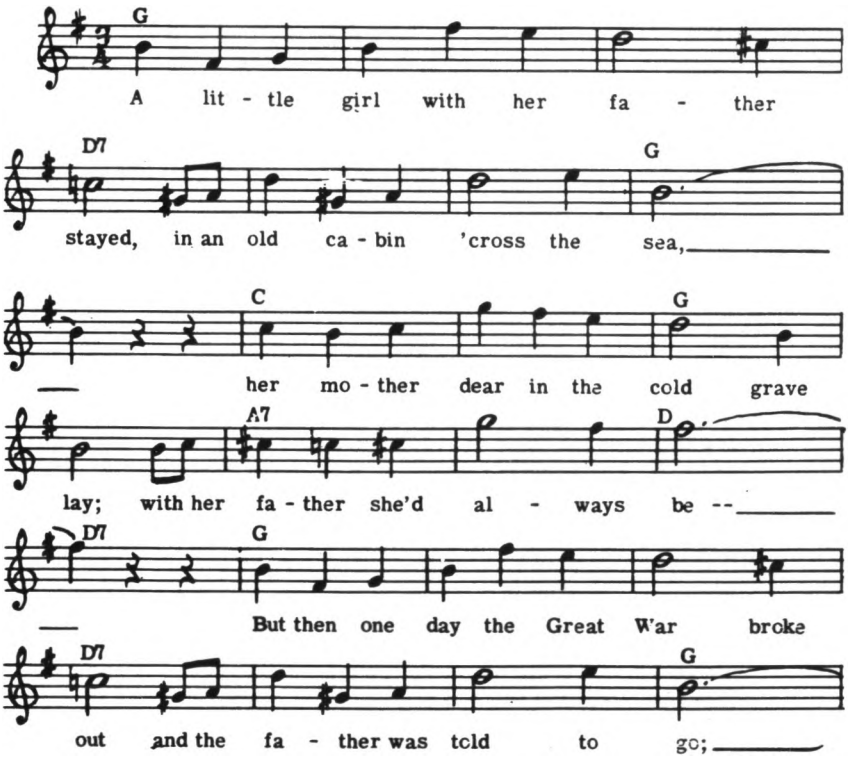
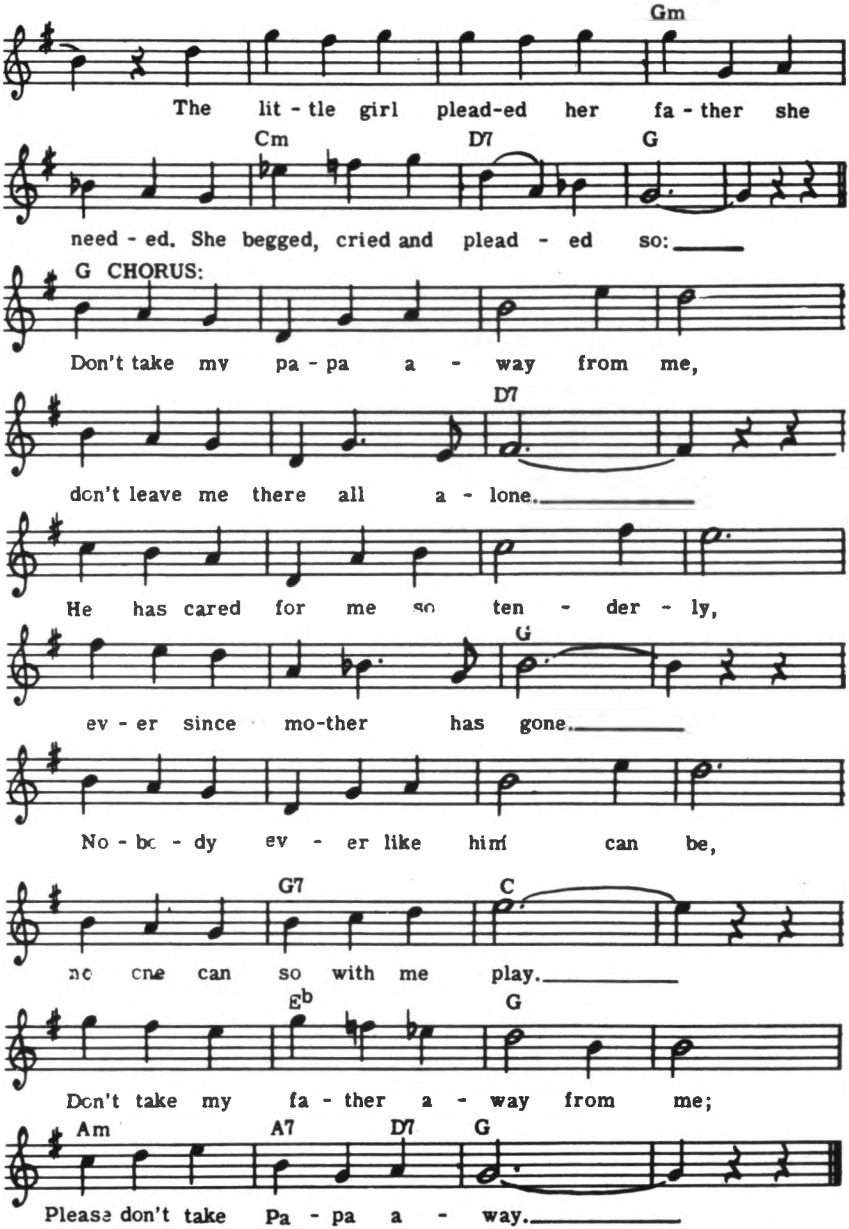
If the workers take a notion,
they can stop all speeding trains;
Every ship upon the ocean
They can tie with mighty chains;
Every wheel in the creation,
Every mine and every mill,
Fleets and armies of the nation,
Will at their command stand still.
-Chorus-

Join the union, fellow workers,
Men and women, side by side;
We will crush the greedy shirkers
Like a sweeping, surging tide;
For united we are standing,
But divided we will fall;
Let this be our understanding --
"All for one and one for all."
-Chorus-

Workers of the world, awaken! Rise in all your splendid might;
Take the wealth that you are making -- it belongs to you by right.
No one will for bread be crying, we'll have freedom, love and health,
When the grand red flag is flying in the Workers' Commonwealth.
-Chorus-

Don't Take My Papa Away From Me

On the last day of his life, when he was only hours away from execution, Joe Hill sent a telegram to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. It read: "Composed new song last week, with music, dedicated to the Dove of Peace. It's coming. And now Goodby, Gurley dear. I have lived like a rebel and I shall die like a rebel."

The song Joe Hill refers to is "Don't Take My Papa Away From Me" and was written sometime during his last seven days. It is a poor song, a sentimental song, representative of the poorer taste of the popular song of that day. However this is not the important thing about the song. Of basic importance is the fact that it is an anti-war song. Joe Hill was a man who was concerned with humanity. He knew his death was imminent and that he would not live to see the results of his fruitful work. Yet he continued working until the last hours of his life. And so, despite the specter of the firing squad, we find him organizing until the very end.

G
A lit - tle girl with her fa - ther
D7
G
stayed, in an old ca - bin 'cross the sea,
C
G
her mo - ther dear in the cold grave
A7
D
lay; with her fa - ther she'd al - ways be --
D7
G
But then one day the Great War broke
D7
G
out and the fa - ther was told to go;

Gm
The lit - tle girl plead-ed her fa - ther she
Cm D7 G
need - ed. She begged, cried and plead - ed so:
G CHORUS:
Don't take my pa - pa a - way from me,
D7
don't leave me there all a - lone.
He has cared for me so ten - der - ly,
G
ev - er since mo-ther has gone.
No - bo - dy ev - er like him can be,
G7 C
no one can so with me play.
Eb G
Don't take my fa - ther a - way from me;
Am A7 D7 G
Please don't take Pa - pa a - way.

Her tender pleadings were all in vain, and her father went to the war.
He'll never kiss her good-night again, for he fell 'mid the cannons' roar.
Greater soldier was never born, but his brave heart was pierced one day;
And as he was dying, he heard someone crying, A girl's voice from far away:
-Chorus-

My Last Will

During the last afternoon of Joe Hill's life a newspaper reporter was allowed to interview him. This interview is quite extraordinary, showing the steadfast courage, strength and serenity of Joe Hill. Here is the section of the interview which deals with the story of how Joe Hill wrote "My Last Will." The reporter asked Joe Hill: "What disposition are you going to make of your effects, your little trinkets and personal belongings. . .?" To which Joe Hill replied: "I really have nothing to dispose of. As for trinkets, keepsakes and jewelry, I never believed in them nor kept them about me. But I have a will to make, and I'll scribble it. I'll send it to the world in care of Ed Rowan" (Secretary of Local 69, Salt Lake City - B.S.) And the reporter then describes how Joe Hill "then sat down on the edge of his cot and inscribed the following valedictory to the world:"

My will is easy to decide,
For there is nothing to divide.
My kin don't need to fuss and moan --
"Moss does not cling to rolling stone."

My body? -- Oh! -- If I could choose,
I would to ashes it reduce,
And let the merry breezes blow
My dust to where some flowers grow.

Perhaps some fading flower then
Would come to life and bloom again.
This is my last and final will.
Good luck to all of you,

JOE HILL

This collection of the songs of Joe Hill, the only published collection of the complete song works of the famed "Wobbly" song-writer, was originally published on November 15th, 1955, in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of Joe Hill's execution.

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